Lindy's SPORTS
AMERICA'S LEADING FOOTBALL AUTHORITY

247Sports RECRUITING INFO
LINDY'S HAS THE BEST AND MOST
SEC POSITION RANKINGS

SOUTHEASTERN

2017 PREVIEW

SOUTH FLORIDA: COACHING MIGRATION

(P.12)

'CATS: WORK TO DO, LOTS TO WORK WITH

LAMAR LEADS THE WAY

NATIONAL VIEW

- **TOP 10** HEISMAN LIST
- **TOP 10** GAMES
- **TOP 10** TRANSFERS
- **TOP 10** STORY LINES

VOLUME 36 • LINDY'S SOUTHEASTERN FOOTBALL • 2017
LINDYSSPORTS.COM
www.lindyssports.com
71
0 74470 01210 8
$8.99 US
Display Until Sept. 10, 2017

GAME DAY IS COMING

YOU SPENT MONTHS PLANNING YOUR TAILGATE

Don't settle for second best. Get DISH and elevate your tailgate with HD TV.

Initial setup time may take longer since receiver requires updating and activation.

Call now - no long-term contract required!

1-877-926-6561

dishformytailgate.com

Requires antenna and receiver purchase. Limit one receiver per antenna. Monthly fees and limits on number and type of receivers will apply. All prices, packages, programming, features, functionality and offers subject to change without notice. All charges, including monthly programming, pay-per-view and equipment upgrades, must be paid in advance; failure to pay by due date will lead to service disconnection within 24 hours. Offer available for new and qualified former customers, and subject to terms of applicable Promotional and Residential Customer agreements. Taxes or reimbursement charges for state gross earnings taxes may apply. Additional restrictions may apply.© 2017 DISH Network L.L.C. All rights reserved.

dish TUNED IN TO YOU

CONTENTS 2017

THE NATION

Tide Again – Trojans, Buckeyes, 'Noles are Close 6
Ranking all 130 teams

Lindy's All-America Teams 22
Sam Darnold plays it cool leading USC.
"Superman" James leads the best defensive backfield.

Lindy's All-America Checklist 26
Player ratings and top position groups

Scoping the Nation 38
Quarterback transfers, Heisman favorites, forgotten stars ... and checking out the TV ratings.

Sidelines 49

National Schedules 62

FEATURES

Florida's Coaching Carousel | By Dennis Dodd 12
Interesting state scenarios in Oklahoma and Texas, too.

Football's Most Interesting Man | By Jon Gold 20
Moglia successful in the board room and the locker room.

Leonard Who? | By Dave Moormann 76
Explosive Guice picks up where Fournette left off.

Get to Know Him Now | By Dennis Dodd 78
Low profile Brian Daboll not yet a household name.

QBs Move Up the SEC | By Anthony Gimino 80
New wave of quarterbacks taking league back to the top.

Keeping the Faith | By Bill Sorrell 177
Hunter Renfrow ... through God, the sky's the limit.

THE SEC

Picking the SEC 68

Around the SEC 72

Rating the SEC by Position 74

2016 SEC Leaders 161

Year in Review 169

A Look Back 216

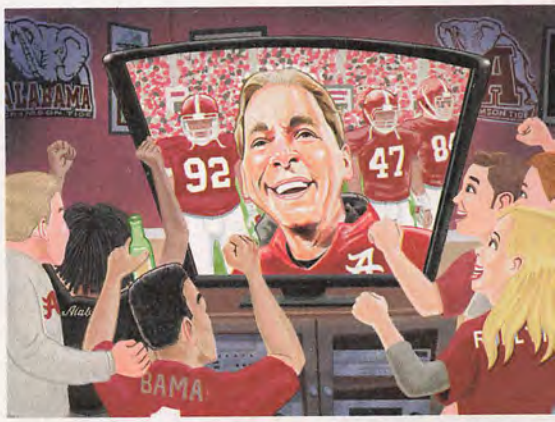
RECRUITING

National Recruiting | By 247Sports 54
Breaking down the Top 25

SEC Recruiting | By 247Sports 65
Rich just get richer ... Nine SEC teams in national Top 25.

NATIONAL PICKS 6
It's Bama ... Again!

PLAYER RATINGS 22
Darnold tops the nation's quarterbacks.



SCOPING THE NATION 38
Crimson Tide success watched by many.

"About the only thing I'd rather do than play basketball is hunt. There's just nothing like enjoying the great outdoors with my friends and family. Plus the challenge posed by the superior senses of your game. I grew up hunting in Louisiana, and I think it's a tradition we should pass on." **I'm The NRA.**

Karl "The Mailman" Malone
Legendary power forward for the Utah Jazz and Los Angeles Lakers, NBA's 2nd all-time scorer and Most Valuable Player '98-99, fisherman, hunter, cattle rancher.

©2017 National Rifle Association of America · 11250 Waples Mill Road · Fairfax, VA 22030 · 1-800-NRA-3888

Did You Know ... "Intense nationwide demand for youth firearms education and safety training is why the NRA works with groups like the Boy Scouts of America, American Legion, 4-H and FFA to develop shooting programs that reach more than 1 million young people annually."

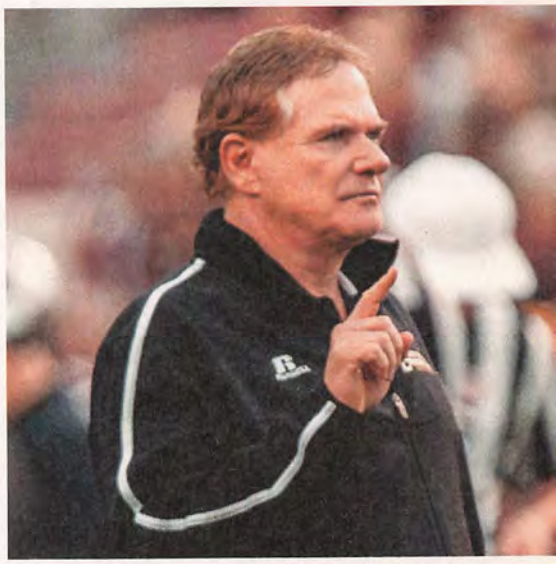
Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President

CONTENTS 2017

THE TEAMS

Alabama 82
Arkansas 90
Arkansas State 185
Auburn 98
Clemson 193
Coastal Carolina 194
Florida 106
Florida Atlantic 195
Florida International 196
Florida State 197
Georgia 114
Georgia Southern 198
Georgia State 199
Georgia Tech 200
Kentucky 122
Louisiana 201
Louisiana-Monroe 202
Louisiana Tech 203
Louisville 204
LSU 130
Memphis 205
Miami 206
Middle Tennessee 207
Mississippi 138
Mississippi State 146
Missouri 154
South Alabama 208
South Carolina 162
South Florida 209
Southern Miss 210
Tennessee 170
Texas A&M 178
Troy 211
Tulane 212
UAB 213
UCF 214
Vanderbilt 186
Western Kentucky 215

STATE OF THE STATES 12
Looking at the coaches in football crazy states.



BOARD ROOMS, LOCKER ROOMS .. 20
Joe Moglia is an interesting man.

NATIONAL UNIT RATINGS 34
These are the best of the best.

Letter from the Publisher

The 2017 season marks the fourth year of the College Football Playoff. There has been one constant in the three previous playoffs – Nick Saban and the Alabama Crimson Tide were the team to beat.

As we head into the new season, Saban and his Bama machine are again the team to beat. *Lindy's* ranks all 130 teams beginning on page 6.

The State of Florida has always been a hotbed for great football talent. It is now officially a hotbed for a number of quality coaches. Dennis Dodd takes a fascinating look at the new head men in the Sunshine State (and also takes a look at the state of things in Oklahoma and Texas) beginning on page 12.

As always, *Lindy's* gives you more excellent recruiting information than any publication on the market.

Your comments and suggestions are appreciated.

Have a great season!

Sincerely,

Lindy Davis Jr.

Lindy Davis

D.M.D. Publications, Inc.
2100 Centennial Drive, Suite 100
Birmingham AL 35216
P: 205-871-1182 • F: 205-871-1184
E-mail: lindy@lindyssports.com
www.lindyssports.com

© 2017 D.M.D. Publications, Inc.
All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

Alliance for Audited Media
The New Audit Bureau of Circulations

Check out *LINDY'S* Sports App for your iPone, iPad and android. Now you can enjoy several of your favorite *Lindy's* magazines digitally!

"like" us on facebook

follow us on twitter

Publisher
J. Lindy Davis, Jr.

Senior Editor
Anthony Gimino

Associate Editors
Don Borst, Shawn O'Neal

Production Manager
Norbert Feliciano

Production Assistant
Whitnee White

Creative
Magaly Aguirre, India Barnett, Tracey Fagan, Norbert Feliciano, Ginny O'Neill, Tim Williams

Photo Editor
R.D. Moore

Editorial/Production Assistants
Mike Chesnick, Geoff Grammer, John Krusinski, Matt Lowe, Deb Naramore, Carol Reece, Kathy Rombough, Lyn Scarbrough, Christopher Wuensch

Advertising/Marketing
Southeast
Lyn Scarbrough • Birmingham
205-437-9483

Northeast - Mid-Atlantic
Fox Associates
adinfo.ldy@foxrep.com
212-725-2106

West Coast
Fox Associates
adinfo.ldy@foxrep.com
805-522-0501

Chicago
Fox Associates
312-644-3888

Newsstand
John Willett, Philip Willett

Office Manager
Kathy Rombough

Orders/Shipping
Grace Gloss

Accounting
Barry Jacobs • Paige Tanner • Agenda Davis

Contributing Writers
Nate Allen, Chris Anderson, Mike Ashley, Stephen Bailey, Mike Barber, Adam Biggers, Chad Bishop, John Blanchette, Paul Borden, Brent Briggeman, Mike Brown, Jim Buice, Jeff Call, Andrew Carter, Guerry Clegg, Bob Condotta, Chad Conine, Graham Couch, Ken Cross, Mike DeFabo, Dominick DiRienzo, Dennis Dodd, Brian Dohn, Wescott Eberts, Cary Estes, Dirk Facer, Bob Ferrante, Jason Galloway, Jon Gold, Thomas Goldkamp, Geoff Grammer, Rob Gray, Andy Greder, Steve Greenberg, Jeff Greer, Tom Groeschen, Andrew Hammond , Craig Handel, Derek Harper, Tommy Hicks, John Hoover, Jimmy Hyams, Sal Interdonato, Chris Jackson, Rich Kaipust, Tom Keegan, Hugh Kellenberger, Kyle Kensing, Tom Kubat, Theo Lawson, Chris Lee, Matt Lowe, Daniel Malone, Matt Markey, Dave Matter, Will McKay, Natalie Meisler, Carlos Mendez, Gina Mizell, Dave Moormann, Javier Morales, Marc Morehouse, Jason Munz, Chris Murray, Bob Narang, Kelly Quinlan, Jerry Ratcliffe, Derek Redd, Jeff Reynolds, Hod Robino, Will Sammon, Pete Sampson, Lyn Scarbrough, Rich Scarcella, Brad Senkiw, Guerry Smith, Jennifer Smith, Doug Smock, Dave Southorn, James Staley, Phil Stukenborg, Ryan Thorburn, Stephen Tsai, Louie Vaccher, Bill Wagner, Christopher Walsh, Ari Wasserman, John Werner, John Whittle, Christopher Wuensch, Steve Wiseman, Scott Wolf, Paul Zeise, Brent Zwerneman

Contributing Photographers
Steve Beyer, Scott Boehm, Tomasso DeRosa, Jeff Goldberg, Dennis Hubbard, Doug Holleman, RD Moore, John Pyle, Joe Robbins, Dave Sizer, Brian Tirpak
Michael Wade, John Williamson,
AP Images • Icon Sports Media
USA Today Sports Images

DON'T FORGET YOUR ASSIGNMENT.

ATTEND YOUR LOCAL EVENT.

Ducks Unlimited hosts over 4000 events across the country each year. By attending a local event, you can have a great time while helping us fill the skies with waterfowl for future generations. To find an event near you or to learn more about volunteering, visit *ducks.org/events*.

DUCKS UNLIMITED

NATIONAL PICKS

Photo by:

This time, good to the last drop

1. Alabama

Alabama had the best college football team in America for 53,999 seconds of game time last season. Slackers. You let up for one second ... Never had one team done so much for so long, never losing, never trailing in the fourth quarter, until the final play from scrimmage in the final game of the season, when Clemson's Deshaun Watson connected with Hunter Renfrow on a 2-yard touchdown pass for a 35-31 lead with one dang second to go.

Maybe that serves as motivation this time around for Alabama. Maybe not. Sometimes, all that mind-game stuff is overrated. You know what's not overrated? Talent. Yeah, talent. Let's not over-think this. Alabama has the biggest, fastest, strongest, the most-est of the best-est.

That's it.

THE GOOD NEWS: Alabama averaged 38.8 points a game last season behind true freshman quarterback Jalen Hurts, and its offense gets less stodgy every year. New offensive coordinator Brian Daboll put his spring focus on further developing the vertical passing game, so he can put that in his back pocket for the rare times when the running game — which goes, like, six deep at tailback — isn't dominant. The athletic Hurts has Calvin Ridley, Robert Foster and new stars in the passing game.

The defense ... well, it's still a Nick Saban defense. With Da'Ron Payne and Da'Shawn Hand up front, Shaun Dion Hamilton and Rashaan Evans at linebacker, and Minkah Fitzpatrick and Ronnie Harrison on the back end, the Tide has a chance to repeat as the nation's stingiest defense. Get this: Alabama hasn't finished WORSE than seventh in scoring defense for *nine consecutive seasons.*

THE BAD NEWS: We get that it is never easy replacing so much NFL talent on defense — Jonathan Allen, Rueben Foster, Marlon Humphrey, Dalvin Tomlinson, Ryan Anderson, Tim Williams. That does sting. On offense, the Tide will try to tip-toe through a potential injury minefield, because behind Hurts are two true freshmen. Beware Bama's opener (vs. Florida State) and closer (at Auburn).

OUR CALL: Is Deshaun Watson still playing college football? No? OK, then. That settles it. Nick Saban is going to win his fifth national championship at Alabama and sixth national championship overall, tying Bear Bryant for most all-time. Cue the parade through Title Town.

NATIONAL PICKS

2. USC

In Sam, we trust

There was some thought that coach Clay Helton waited too long last season to insert redshirt freshman quarterback Sam Darnold into the starting lineup, but maybe he slow-played it just right. The Trojans started 1-2 and then lost Darnold's first start, but the USC slow burn caught fire with a nine-game winning streak, capped by the Rose Bowl thriller over Penn State. It's all great again in 2017, with Darnold having developed a presence that makes him seem like he's been playing in the NFL for a decade.

THE GOOD NEWS: USC added immediate-impact playmakers by closing large on Signing Day. They'll join junior Ronald Jones II — the Next Great USC Running Back — and emerging WR Deontay Burnett (13 Rose Bowl receptions) to help Darnold. DT Rasheem Green, LB Cameron Smith, CB Iman Marshall have loads of upside.

THE BAD NEWS: A rebuilding offensive line will be tested early — Week Two vs. Stanford, Week Three vs. Texas. Speaking of the schedule, the Trojans have to play 12 weeks in a row because the Pac-12 put USC's "bye" at the end of the regular season and before the league title game.

OUR CALL: We have been burned by this bet before, but we're going all in on USC to run the table and reach the College Football Playoff.

3. Ohio State

From semifinal to chicken salad

Nine first downs. A scant 215 yards of total offense. By God, zero points. Clemson's 31-0 victory over the Buckeyes in last season's playoff semifinal was a complete and utter shutdown — and, oh, you'd better believe it was embarrassing to Urban Meyer. It wasn't exactly a picnic either for quarterback J.T. Barrett, starter of 29 games and the school record-holder with 100 total touchdowns. The motivation for 2017: It's real, baby.

THE GOOD NEWS: Have we mentioned J.T. Barrett? Look, everybody has a bad game. Barrett, who has lost only three times as a starter, hasn't had many. The Buckeyes might not be lights-out offensively — are the pass-catchers good enough? — but they'll be brilliant up front on defense. One wonders if there are enough snaps to go around for hell-bent pass rushers Tyquan Lewis, Jalyn Holmes, Sam Hubbard and Nick Bosa.

THE BAD NEWS: Have we mentioned the pass-catchers? The top returning wideout is sophomore K.J. Hill, whose stat line read 18-262-1 last year. It's an odd area of weakness — on paper, anyway — for a program that has recruited as top-of-the-charts as this one.

OUR CALL: Meyer has earned our steadfast belief in his ability to make chicken salad out of whatever you want to call that performance against Clemson.

4. Florida State

Protect QB, win ACC

One thing — one particular score line — sticks out like the sorest of thumbs when looking at the Seminoles: their preposterous 63-20 defeat at Louisville last September. It rocked the college football world. It raised all sorts of culture questions about FSU (which it will try to answer against the visiting Cardinals on Oct. 21, 2017). Yet the team rebounded admirably, winning seven of its last eight, the only loss coming in forgivable fashion after a late TD by eventual national champ Clemson.

THE GOOD NEWS: Deondre Francois is back — standing on two feet and everything. Did any quarterback get hit harder than Francois did as a redshirt freshman? Yet he survived and proved himself to be a terrific player. True freshman RB Cam Akers is a drop-dead instant star. Safety Derwin James is one of the most talented defensive players in the land.

THE BAD NEWS: There's the whole protecting-the-quarterback thing, which didn't go so well in 2016. Defensively, the Seminoles were unthinkably soft in some games, although they finished the season well on that side of the ball. But are they ready to fly around and intimidate from the get-go?

OUR CALL: There's a leap of faith involved in picking this team to come out of the ACC. That might mean having to win at Clemson in November.

5. Oklahoma State

Gonna take some Bedlam

OK, so we know what you're thinking: Really? This high? Yep. Clearly, it means we've got Mike Gundy's team winning the Big 12. OSU's eight wins in its last nine games last season has something to do with it. The bowl romp over Colorado — hello, 38-8 — has a lot to do with it. The home date for Bedlam against Oklahoma in November sure as heck doesn't hurt, either.

THE GOOD NEWS: The offense will be, in a word, *sick*. QB Mason Rudolph is primed for Heisman candidacy. WR James Washington rolls out of bed catching deep balls. RB Justice Hill is one of Gundy's most promising yet. Win one shootout after another? The Cowboys are as equipped as ever to do it.

THE BAD NEWS: Defensive tackle is a question mark. Linebacker is a question mark. Who are we kidding? Defense at OSU is always a question mark. Coordinator Glenn Spencer must coax another turnover-heavy season from his unit for the Cowboys to live up to this ranking.

OUR CALL: Bedlam? We'd fast-forward to it right now if we could. Gundy's program still can't quite match Bob Stoops' program in terms of overall talent, but sometimes timing is everything. And with the new Big 12 title game set-up, they might have to do it twice.

6. Penn State

Return to Roses is possible

What was more surprising, the way the Nittany Lions lost January's Rose Bowl — surrendering a 14-point fourth-quarter lead to USC and going down on a long field goal at the gun — or the fact they made it to Pasadena in the first place? The latter seems to be the easy answer. James Franklin's third season at the helm was a spectacular success.

THE GOOD NEWS: The essential formula in 2016 boiled down to hanging in there on defense so the offense could carry the day. Offense again seems to be the better side of the ball, with Trace McSorley and Saquon Barkley one of the best quarterback-running back duos out there. Yet the defense, rich in returning starters, should be markedly better. The pass rush looks potent.

THE BAD NEWS: Depth is still an issue; lots of young guys will be rounding out the two-deep. The unbalanced Big Ten schedule includes five road games — at Iowa, Northwestern, Ohio State, Michigan State and Maryland. This'll take some heavy lifting.

OUR CALL: There's a chance the Nits will be favored 11 times — all except for the one in Columbus. Anything less than double-digit victories would be disappointing. A potential return to the Roses would mean a CFP semi. Don't count 'em out.

7. Clemson

How much did one guy matter?

It isn't often that a defending national champ is ranked this low the following preseason. Is the departure of quarterback Deshaun Watson the long and the short of why? Pretty much. The expected ascension of Florida State is part of it, too, as is the Tigers' schedule. But who's been better than Team Dabo the last couple of years? Nobody.

THE GOOD NEWS: The defense seems ready to take the baton and sprint out to the front. The Tigers will be wicked up front. Christian Wilkins, Clelin Ferrell, Austin Bryant ... and it doesn't stop there. Can't wait to see how well insanely large Dexter Lawrence does. Coordinator Brent Venables is a happy dude.

THE BAD NEWS: It's not just that Watson is off to the NFL, it's that no one has an inkling who will replace him. Kelly Bryant looks the part, but he has aim issues. Zerrick Cooper looks promising, but he never was intended to be Plan A. Maybe five-star freshman Hunter Johnson?

OUR CALL: There's no getting around the uncertainty at the most important position. No. 7 is indeed low for a defending champ, but we admit to wondering if we're betting too heavily on the Tigers at that spot.

NATIONAL PICKS

8. Washington

Get used to Top 10 bark

That coach Chris Petersen could get Washington to a Pac-12 title and the College Football Playoff in just his third season in Seattle really makes you wonder what the Huskies were doing for much of, oh, the past two decades. Get used to it. Coach Pete, now armed with a higher class of athlete than he had in his successful run at Boise State, is unleashing Washington's full power.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Jake Browning, RB Myles Gaskin and WR Dante Pettis are among the most impressive offensive trios in the country, and a veteran line will keep the efficiency high. The defensive front seven — DT Vita Vea, LB Azeem Victor, et. al — will be stingy once again.

THE BAD NEWS: The Huskies lose super-speedy WR John Ross and a large core of its defense, including CB Sidney Jones, S Budda Baker and DL Elijah Qualls. The secondary will go from one of the nation's best to one of the U-Dub's foremost questions.

OUR CALL: So, Washington couldn't handle Alabama in the national semifinal. It happens. Another soft schedule eases any growing pains and sets up nicely for an 8-0 start before November.

9. Oklahoma

Chip on shoulder won't hurt

Last season started so dismayingly for the Sooners, who lost convincingly at Houston in the opener and fell hard two weeks later to Ohio State at home, that they actually fell out of the AP Top 25 for a blink of an eye. Boy, did they ever bounce back, winning out from there to finish 11-2. You think they think like we think — that Oklahoma State is the team to beat in the Big 12? No chance.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Baker Mayfield is back. He's a superstar, though the team loses Heisman-finalist WR Dede Westbrook and running backs Joe Mixon and Samaje Perine. Defensively, the Sooners have re-emphasized run-stopping and rushing the passer. They have the players to be highly disruptive on both counts.

THE BAD NEWS: This team waved goodbye to more high-end talent than most. And the schedule — at Ohio State, at Baylor, at Kansas State, at Oklahoma State — is far from ideal.

OUR CALL: Season No. 19 for Bob Stoops could be a real bear. He has lost more than two games only once in the past four campaigns. It'll be all the Sooners can do to keep that from happening a second time in five.

10. Auburn

It's all practice until November

College football's biggest offseason player transaction was quarterback Jarrett Stidham's decision to attend Auburn. The depth chart wasn't officially decided after spring ball, but, c'mon. Stidham is the athletic dual-threat who can unlock coach Gus Malzahn's spread attack and bring it back to 2013 levels — 500 yards, 40 points per game and a near-miss in the BCS national championship game. Yes, Gus, this is the quarterback you're looking for.

THE GOOD NEWS: Stidham, who began his career at Baylor, is supported by the great backfield combo of Kamryn Pettway and Kerryon Johnson, and tackle Braden Smith should chase All-America honors. Good recruiting helps ease the loss of pass-rushers. In close games, Auburn has the kicking edge with Daniel Carlson.

THE BAD NEWS: The struggles have been real: Auburn is 0-6 against Alabama and Georgia in the past three years, failing to score more than 13 points in five of the losses. Point is, hold your optimism on the Tigers until mid-November this year. (At least both meetings are in Auburn.)

OUR CALL: The Tigers have lost 16 games in the past three seasons, but there's nothing fundamentally broken. Just add the right quarterback and bring on a 10-win season.

11. Wisconsin

Clear sailing to Big Ten title game?

Things broke horribly wrong for the Badgers after they went up 28-7 on Penn State in the 2016 Big Ten title game. Playoff hopes: derailed. A spot in the Rose Bowl: denied. So, where from there? Another West Division title would be just the thing.

THE GOOD NEWS: Wisconsin lost its best offensive lineman, All-American Ryan Ramczyk, to the NFL. It has zero seniors returning to the unit. And yet this is a place of tremendous strength. Led by Beau Benzschawel, this will be an outstanding front wall. Everything seems to flow well for the Badgers when the O-line is right, and it's right. By the way, the defensive line might be just as good.

THE BAD NEWS: It's almost nit-picking when a team is fortunate enough to be rock-solid along both lines of scrimmage, but there are seeming weak spots. Outside of wideout Jazz Peavy and tight end Troy Fumagalli, the receiving group is wanting. Quarterback Alex Hornibrook is good, not great.

OUR CALL: The walls of flesh are there on both sides of the ball — more so than at any school in the Big Ten West — and the schedule is much friendlier than it was a year ago. Sneaky-great, this team could be.

12. Georgia

Poised to leapfrog Gators

Kirby Smart's debut season wasn't all rainbows and unicorns. Georgia lost four of its first six SEC games, and Smart dug himself an early hole in the rivalries against Florida and (even) Georgia Tech. Chalk up an inconsistent 8-5 season to the coaching transition and youth — including at QB with true freshman Jacob Eason — but 17 returning starters are a year older and Smart kicked some Signing Day butt, bringing in the nation's third-ranked class. The long-term plan looks just fine.

THE GOOD NEWS: Eason could blossom as a sophomore — that's often what quarterbacks do — and it's hard to believe Nick Chubb and Sony Michel are still around to tote the rock. Ten starters return from a defense that allowed 24 points per game, including pass-rushing OLBs Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy.

THE BAD NEWS: The offensive line wasn't great last season and is replacing three starters, especially dicey in the SEC, where great defensive linemen roam. There are road games at Notre Dame, Tennessee, Auburn, Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt (which won in Athens last season).

OUR CALL: Florida has won the past two SEC East titles but hasn't exactly put a headlock on a division in transition. Georgia has the talent, balance and Year 2 comfort level to win the East for the first time since 2012.

13. Louisville

Much more than just Jackson

By chance, have you heard of Lamar Jackson? Probably you have. Louisville brings back last season's Heisman-winning quarterback — and if that isn't a fine place to start, what the heck is? Last year didn't end so well, though, with three straight defeats almost ruining things. Ouch.

THE GOOD NEWS: Jackson had a great spring, surprising approximately no one. He has a dynamite receiving target in Dez Fitzpatrick, who went wild in the spring game. Cornerback Jaire Alexander is the star of a fast, highly capable defense. There's no reason this team can't captivate the country again in 2017.

THE BAD NEWS: The overall physicality of the program remains in question, given how meekly the Cardinals went out the door late last year. The schedule is brutal, too, with games at North Carolina and vs. Clemson in September, and FSU looming as an away mother-of-all-tests.

OUR CALL: Ten wins? With a big victory or two in September, it seems doable. People can talk all they want about Jackson's (seeming lack of) NFL potential. The fact is he's a one-of-a-kind talent right now.

NATIONAL PICKS

14. Michigan

Major rebuild, but if anybody can...

What can we say? Michigan was a heck of a team in 2016. For a while there, it looked like the Wolverines might be best-in-the-land good. They started 9-0 and rose to No. 2 in the polls, but it ended ... imperfectly, let's call it. Three losses by a total of five points (including at Ohio State in double-overtime) crushed spirits in Ann Arbor. So close, so far. But now?

THE GOOD NEWS: Let's not wait to mention coach Jim Harbaugh, whose very presence makes the Wolverines formidable. He has recruited exceptionally well, and the culture in the program is robustly positive. QB Wilton Speight is back, too, to keep the train on the rails.

THE BAD NEWS: No team in the country was gutted on the depth chart more than this one. It's almost a restart for Harbaugh and the Wolverines, who might be a year away from serious contention in the Big Ten. At least the pressure is off, somewhat.

OUR CALL: Winning the Big Ten would be a shock. The neutral-site season opener against Florida might come too soon, and games at Penn State and Wisconsin will be huge tests. At least Michigan gets to build toward a regular-season finale at home against Ohio State.

15. LSU

It's all Ed's, but it won't be easy

Nobody fills up a passion bucket faster than the fiery 54-year-old Ed Orgeron, who took over for fired Les Miles five games into last season. But it's not about how far Orgeron can move the excitement needle, it's about stuff like this: Can he recruit? Duh. Can he hire great offensive assistants and modernize the attack? All eyes are on OC Matt Canada from Pitt. Can he find an elite QB? Check back in a year or two.

THE GOOD NEWS: LSU fans crave more creativity from the offense, but there's nothing wrong with handing the ball to Derrius Guice, who does a really nice impersonation of Leonard Fournette. A veteran front leads the way for a defense that's always relentless and always among the nation's best.

THE BAD NEWS: The upside of QB Danny Etling is limited. The annual exodus of defensive stars — such as CB Tre'Davious White and S Jamal Adams — took place right on schedule. You can assume Orgeron is a better head coach than he was at Ole Miss, but let's call that one TBD.

OUR CALL: In four of the past five seasons, LSU finished 14, 14, 16, and 13 in the final AP poll, and was unranked the other season. Can Orgeron's Tigers get back to the high-rent district? Not this fast.

16. Florida

Paucity of points is a problem

Considering what he inherited — a team that had gone 11-13 in the previous two seasons under Will Muschamp — there are no complaints with Jim McElwain winning back-to-back SEC East titles. But we need to talk about that offense. The Gators have failed to score more than 20 points in half of their 22 games against Power 5 conference schools under McElwain. That strikes us as an unsustainable model for success.

THE GOOD NEWS: Hey, the Gators might have a quarterback. It's not a done deal heading into fall camp, but redshirt freshman Feleipe Franks just might be the spark UF needs to pair with WR Antonio Callaway and RB Jordan Scarlett. Florida faces only three true (and manageable) road games: Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina.

THE BAD NEWS: Too many of the 2016 Gators will be playing defense in the NFL in 2017. If not Franks at QB, is Luke Del Rio, out this spring after shoulder surgery, dynamic enough? A high bar in the non-con schedule includes Michigan (in Arlington, Texas) and Florida State, which has beaten them four times in a row.

OUR CALL: It's inconceivable that McElwain won't get the offense rolling at some point, able to pair that with a shut-down defense. This might not quite be that intersection.

17. USF

Seeking a Strong impact

When you go 11-2 and beat an SEC opponent (South Carolina) in a bowl game, you've got a lot to feel good about. USF's breakthrough 2016 season cost it coach Willie Taggart (he left for Oregon), but could the Bulls have done any better than Charlie Strong as Taggart's replacement?

THE GOOD NEWS: Let's agree that Strong and Texas weren't a good fit. Now Strong is back in a state where he has spent so many seasons during his fine career. And he has an explosive offense, led by quarterback Quinton Flowers (1,530 rushing yards, 2,812 passing yards).

THE BAD NEWS: That definitely wasn't an 11-win kind of defense that the Bulls had in 2016, giving up 482.0 yards per game. This is where Strong has to make an instant impact, something he clearly wasn't able to do in his most recent job.

OUR CALL: We're not saying Strong has a better situation right now than he had in Texas. But we're not NOT saying it, either. The Bulls have had a taste of winning big — now they want more. Here's your Group of Five top dog.

18. Stanford

So consistent we take 'em for granted

Last season seemed like a down year. Stanford lost three of its first seven games, was never a threat in the Pac-12 North, and never quite got Christian McCaffrey onto his expected Heisman run (although he was still fabulous). Something of a disaster, right? And then the season is over, you look up, and the Cardinal has its usual double-digit 10 victories and finishes No. 12 in the AP poll. Pause here to appreciate the consistency of coach David Shaw.

THE GOOD NEWS: Stanford won its final six games of last season and found an answer at quarterback in Keller Chryst (more on him in the bad news). McCaffrey understudy, RB Bryce Love, averaged 7 yards a carry last season, powered by rocket fuel.

THE BAD NEWS: Chryst suffered a torn ACL in the Sun Bowl. Get well soon, because Stanford has early conference games at USC (Sept. 9) and vs. UCLA (Sept. 23). The departure of DT Solomon Thomas to NFL riches quiets the Cardinal's pass rush.

OUR CALL: Stanford has spent only one season out of the last seven outside of the final 12 in the AP poll. So, this ranking is low. We understand. We underestimate the Cardinal at our own peril.

19. Miami

November rally raising Canes

The Hurricanes entered November in a bad way, having lost four consecutive games. But they tore off a 5-0 streak to end Mark Richt's first season as coach, and that was big. Coming off a dominant performance against West Virginia in the Russell Athletic Bowl, the program is pointed in the right direction. Richt signed the 13th-rated class in the country in February and was on his way to doing even better in the 2018 class.

THE GOOD NEWS: A highly disruptive defensive front seven should be the anchor of the team. Shaquille Quarterman, Kendrick Norton, Chad Thomas — these are big-time guys. After improving dramatically during the aforementioned 5-0 streak, Miami's offensive line charges into 2017 with major momentum.

THE BAD NEWS: How good would this team look if Brad Kaaya had returned to start at quarterback for a fourth and final year? Junior Malik Rosier and sophomore Evan Shirreffs still are duking it out with each other (and with true freshman N'Kosi Perry) for the starting job after an underwhelming spring.

OUR CALL: Soon, 'Canes fan. Soon. But an ACC title this year? It's just too far-fetched for our blood.

20. TCU

Like a rubber ball

After the combined 23-3 success of 2014 and '15, things went wrong in ways big and small for the Horned Frogs last year. The main culprit was a subpar Big 12 offense, though it alone doesn't account for why Gary Patterson's team finished below .500 in league play and lost five of its last seven games to finish 6-7.

THE GOOD NEWS: The defense is bigger and should be potent, with quality depth throughout the first two levels. There are six returning defensive backs (remember, the alignment here is a 4-2-5) who have a combined 88 career starts. QB Kenny Hill and RB Kyle Hicks are back to try to get it right on the other side of the ball.

THE BAD NEWS: We mentioned Hill, and he plainly wasn't good enough in his first season after transferring from Texas A&M. Dropped passes can't continue to be a theme, nor can losing the turnover battle against quality opponents. Also: Is there a kicker in the building?

OUR CALL: Overall improvement seems like a given, and this Top 25-caliber program will bounce back with vigor. The Frogs had better be road warriors, though. They play at Arkansas and Oklahoma State and visit Oklahoma down the line.

21. Northwestern

Good on paper, and on the schedule

When last season began with home defeats against Western Michigan and Illinois State, the wheels could have flown off. But disaster was averted. The Wildcats won at Iowa and Michigan State and nearly pulled off a shocker at Ohio State. Then their upset of Pittsburgh in the Pinstripe Bowl was impressive. The table is set for a run at the Big Ten West title.

THE GOOD NEWS: Any time you look up at the cross-divisional schedule and see that Ohio State and Michigan aren't on it, you do a little dance. And the Wildcats are good, period, with Clayton Thorson entering his third season as starting quarterback, bell-cow running back Justin Jackson still in the fold, and gobs of other returning starters on both sides of the ball.

THE BAD NEWS: Speaking relatively — this is Northwestern — nothing jumps out. Speed might be an issue on defense, and the loss of wide receiver Austin Carr, maybe the best the Wildcats have ever had, will be felt. Thorson's big right arm still isn't a sure thing.

OUR CALL: On paper, this might actually be the best team coach Pat Fitzgerald has had. And he surprised a lot of people with 10 victories in 2012 and '15.

22. West Virginia

Amassing frequent flyer miles doesn't help

It's a bit hard to believe Dana Holgorsen already is in Year 7 in Morgantown, isn't it? The last one was his finest: a 10-win breakthrough that saw his squad ranked in the Top 10 midway into November. There are those who believe 2017 will be even better for the Mountaineers. This is Holgorsen's chance to drive winning roots deep under the sod.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Will Grier looks like the real deal, which could dial up a great season offensively for West Virginia. Grier — coming off a year's suspension for testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs during his time at Florida — had an outstanding spring.

THE BAD NEWS: Every schedule presents multiple serious challenges, but this one does more than most. The home opener against Virginia Tech could start things off on the wrong foot. But the league roadies — at TCU, Baylor, Kansas State and Oklahoma — look more than a little daunting.

OUR CALL: No, the Mountaineers don't have to win the Big 12 to have the right kind of outcome. They do need to win the games they should, and maybe one they shouldn't. They've got it in them.

23. Texas

Rebuilding isn't required; winning is

Last season started with a thrilling double-overtime victory over Notre Dame that got everyone talking. It ended with three straight defeats, one of them — oh, the ignominy — at Kansas, ending the suspense about coach Charlie Strong. There have been three straight losing seasons at Texas — unthinkable, unconscionable, unforgivable — so enter hot-shot young coach Tom Herman.

THE GOOD NEWS: Strong would say this season could've been really good with him still at the helm. That's because the Longhorns have a lot of the signs of a team that's ready to move forward. The offense, even without tremendous RB D'Onta Foreman, is still stacked. The defense looks ready, too.

THE BAD NEWS: This still isn't quite a Texas-sized roster. Culturally, Herman will have to raise internal — note: not external — expectations. Defensive coordinator Todd Orlando has a lot on his plate, though he's a good one. At USC in September? Tough measuring stick.

OUR CALL: Herman punched his ticket and now has himself on full display. Right guy, right time? Seems like it. There's some good stuff going on in Austin. The Longhorns will someday soon be back to winning big. For this season, how about kinda big?

24. Boise State

Ready to let 'er Ryp

Are we supposed to believe it's as simple as plug-and-play at Boise? Goodness, it isn't. Coach Bryan Harsin has done outstanding work, going 31-9 thus far, including 10-3 last season. But Broncos fans — yeah, they're spoiled — want to see if he can take the next step and make screaming-loud Group of Five noise. The schedule has enough meat to draw attention, especially if you realize how competitive it is in the Mountain Division of the Mountain West.

THE GOOD NEWS: Brett Rypien — Mark's nephew, if you're wondering — has everything locked down at quarterback. This is an excellent player, a two-time first-team All-Mountain West selection, and he has a 1,000-yard target in senior WR Cedrick Wilson.

THE BAD NEWS: Defensively, this Broncos team has to get feistier; it didn't make enough big plays to be considered the big-league stuff the program needs. The Week Two game at Washington State will be illuminating. Other non-cons are Virginia on the blue turf, and at BYU.

OUR CALL: We're not saying the Broncos are what they were in the best of the Chris Petersen years. But we fundamentally believe the projected Mountain West champion should be ranked.

25. Utah

Banging on the South ceiling

Five different teams have filled their trophy cases with Pac-12 South trophies in the past five seasons, but all Utah has to show for that time is a ribbon for "Most Consistent Program." Settling in nicely now to their Pac-12 digs — not a surprise with a coach like Kyle Whittingham — the Utes have 16 conference victories in the past three seasons and three consecutive finishes in the AP Top 25. Expect more of the same in 2017.

THE GOOD NEWS: Utah hired OC Troy Taylor from Eastern Washington, signaling that the Utes will get more serious about a no-huddle passing game behind senior QB Troy Williams or maybe Alabama transfer Cooper Bateman. DT Lowell Lotulelei came back to lead a stout line that includes DE Kylie Fitts.

THE BAD NEWS: A revamped offensive line could undermine the changes on offense, and ball-hawking S Marcus Williams isn't around anymore to erase mistakes in the secondary. Utes play at USC and Washington.

OUR CALL: Utah's ceiling? Well, it is the roof. The Utes won't go zooming to the sky this season, but we like their chances to repeat a 9-4 season.

RATING THE TEAMS 1-130

1. Alabama	SEC	1	6. Penn State	Big Ten	2	11. Wisconsin	Big Ten	3	16. Florida	SEC	5	21. Northwestern	Big Ten	5
2. USC	Pac-12	1	7. Clemson	ACC	2	12. Georgia	SEC	3	17. USF	AAC	1	22. West Virginia	Big 12	4
3. Ohio State	Big Ten	1	8. Washington	Pac-12	2	13. Louisville	ACC	3	18. Stanford	Pac-12	3	23. Texas	Big 12	5
4. Florida State	ACC	1	9. Oklahoma	Big 12	2	14. Michigan	Big Ten	4	19. Miami	ACC	4	24. Boise State	MW	1
5. Oklahoma State	Big 12	1	10. Auburn	SEC	2	15. LSU	SEC	4	20. TCU	Big 12	3	25. Utah	Pac-12	4

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
26.	Kansas State	Big 12	6	Won 6 of final 7 last season, QB Jesse Ertz is a tough-guy leader.
27.	Georgia Tech	ACC	5	New QB after 9-win season, but ACC Coastal crown within reach.
28.	Notre Dame	Ind	1	QB Brandon Wimbush tries to lead bounce-back from 4-8 season.
29.	Virginia Tech	ACC	6	Questions on O, but salty back seven on D keeps Tech in Coastal hunt.
30.	Washington State	Pac-12	5	QB Luke Falk returns for senior season; keep the record book handy.
31.	Arkansas	SEC	6	QB Austin Allen is a steadying influence; will new-look defense work?
32.	Oregon	Pac-12	6	Senior RB Royce Freeman is a good start; Ducks could be back on O.
33.	BYU	Ind	2	BYU's four losses last season were by a total of eight points.
34.	Pitt	ACC	7	Beat Penn State, Clemson last season; 11-5 in ACC in past 2 seasons.
35.	Iowa	Big Ten	6	Expectations lowered from 2016 as QB C.J. Beathard is out the door.
36.	Nebraska	Big Ten	7	Huskers' excellent recruiting efforts might show up ... in 2018.
37.	Tennessee	SEC	7	Missed big opportunity in division last year, lost a lot of firepower.
38.	UCLA	Pac-12	7	QB Rosen is star attraction, but Jim Mora hasn't made the pieces fit.
39.	Texas A&M	SEC	8	Hot seat alert for Kevin Sumlin, who lacks pieces to contend in West.
40.	Minnesota	Big Ten	8	P.J. Fleck takes over 9-4 team after great run at Western Michigan.
41.	Colorado	Pac-12	8	After surprising run to South title, Buffs have to fill holes on defense.
42.	Western Kentucky	C-USA	1	Mike Sanford Jr. takes over high-scoring O, led by QB Mike White.
43.	Toledo	MAC	1	Rockets looking good with QB Logan Woodside (45 TDs in 2016).
44.	Wyoming	MW	2	QB Josh Allen is first-round prospect, but RB Brian Hill is gone.
45.	North Carolina	ACC	8	No. 2 pick Mitch Trubisky is gone. In is LSU transfer Brandon Harris?
46.	South Carolina	SEC	9	Will Muschamp can build in second year around QB Jake Bentley.
47.	NC State	ACC	9	Not lacking playmakers; potential sleeper. Haven't we said that before?
48.	Michigan State	Big Ten	9	Can't be as bad as 3-9 again, but Sparty lacks signs of '17 greatness.
49.	Kentucky	SEC	10	Wildcats got to bowl last season; school investing in Mark Stoops.
50.	Navy	AAC	2	QB Zach Abey (two career starts) takes the reins of triple-option.
51.	San Diego State	MW	3	Aztecs rebuild after finishing No. 25 in AP; still class of West division.
52.	Mississippi State	SEC	11	QB Nick Fitzgerald led the SEC in total offense last year (3,798 yards).
53.	Ole Miss	SEC	12	Rebels under a bowl ban as QB Shea Patterson takes over full time.
54.	UCF	AAC	3	Second-year coach Scott Frost has UCF soaring higher than 6-7 mark.
55.	Temple	AAC	4	Owls looking for third consecutive AAC East Division championship.
56.	Vanderbilt	SEC	13	Rarely an easy out; Commodores aim for back-to-back bowl seasons.
57.	Memphis	AAC	5	Tigers hunt title with QB Riley Ferguson, WR Anthony Miller.
58.	Houston	AAC	6	A&M transfer Kyle Allen next up at QB for new coach Major Applewhite.
59.	Texas Tech	Big 12	7	QB Nic Shimonek inherits attack from 1st-rounder Patrick Mahomes.
60.	Baylor	Big 12	8	Ex-Temple coach Matt Ruhle tries to put the brakes on program's fall.
61.	Tulsa	AAC	7	After 10-win season, Tulsa looking to replace veteran QB Dane Evans.
62.	Oregon State	Pac-12	9	Some stability at QB would help, but Beavers not a bad spoiler pick.
63.	Maryland	Big Ten	10	Terps are just 8-17 in conference play since joining Big Ten in 2014.
64.	Arizona	Pac-12	10	If backfield stays healthy, Cats have enough O to sneak into a bowl.
65.	Arizona State	Pac-12	11	If Devils don't fix pass defense, it'll be 3rd straight losing season.
66.	Missouri	SEC	14	QB Drew Lock flings it pretty well, but now defense needs a fix.
67.	Appalachian State	Sun Belt	1	Mountaineers looking for third straight season of double-digit Ws.
68.	Colorado State	MW	4	The Rams offense should be special; the defense, not so much.
69.	Ohio	MAC	2	Won MAC East last season, has enough pieces to do it again.
70.	New Mexico	MW	5	Won 9 games last season with nation's best run game (350 ypg).
71.	Central Michigan	MAC	3	Michigan transfer QB Shane Morris planning on enrolling in summer.
72.	Air Force	MW	6	Closed with 6-game win streak when QB Arion Worthman took over.
73.	Wake Forest	ACC	10	Offensively challenged but within range of bowl for second year in row.
74.	Syracuse	ACC	11	In Year 2 under coach Dino Babers, scoring points won't be the issue.
75.	Middle Tennessee	C-USA	2	Has top pass-catch combo with Brent Stockstill-to-Richie James.
76.	Troy	Sun Belt	2	QB Brandon Silvers leads Trojans team that won 10 games in 2016.
77.	Western Michigan	MAC	4	After magical season, ex-WMU QB Tim Lester now paddling boat.
78.	Arkansas State	Sun Belt	3	Did you know? The Red Wolves have 56 wins in the past six years.
79.	Army West Point	Ind	3	QB Ahmad Bradshaw returns; Army beat Navy for first time in 15 years.
80.	Iowa State	Big 12	9	Just 11 total wins in four years...but skill positions aren't bad.
81.	Indiana	Big Ten	11	No winning season since '07, Indiana turns to new coach Tom Allen.
82.	Cal	Pac-12	12	Justin Wilcox draws first head coaching assignment at 40.
83.	Louisiana Tech	C-USA	3	Watch for DE Jaylon Ferguson; Tech goes for third West title in 4 years.
84.	Boston College	ACC	12	Lack of passing game keeping Eagles from upward mobility.
85.	Virginia	ACC	13	Plenty of work after Cavs went 2-10 in Bronco Mendenhall's debut.
86.	Cincinnati	AAC	8	Ex-Ohio State interim Luke Fickell more ready now to be head coach.
87.	Duke	ACC	14	QB Daniel Jones emerged last season to provide hope for 2017.
88.	Southern Miss	C-USA	4	New QB will have a lot to say if team can improve on 7-6 record.
89.	Purdue	Big Ten	12	Hire of Jeff Brohm from Western Kentucky is bolt of energy for program.
90.	Kansas	Big 12	10	Just a reminder that Jayhawks beat Texas last year. Still sinking in.
91.	Utah State	MW	7	Buried for now in Mountain division; would compete in West.
92.	Hawaii	MW	8	Was a surprising 7-7 last season; gave up 40+ points in half its games.
93.	Georgia Southern	Sun Belt	4	Should bounce back a little with more cohesive offense after 5-7 year.
94.	SMU	AAC	9	Mustangs have WR Courtland Sutton, ready to at least break even.
95.	South Alabama	Sun Belt	5	Remember: Jaguars beat Mississippi State, San Diego State last year.
96.	Illinois	Big Ten	13	Lovie Smith didn't have enough O in debut season; give him time.
97.	Northern Illinois	MAC	5	Need to find quarterback stability to get back to winning ways.
98.	Idaho	Sun Belt	6	With talented QB Matt Linehan, Idaho could exit FBS in style.
99.	Miami (Ohio)	MAC	6	On the rise after 6-2 MAC mark; watch for QB Gus Ragland.
100.	UTSA	C-USA	5	Coach Frank Wilson got team into bowl at 6-6 in his first season.
101.	Bowling Green	MAC	7	Sophomore QB James Morgan hoping to lead offensive revival.
102.	Ball State	MAC	8	Ball State has talented RB James Gilbert to improve 1-7 league mark.
103.	Eastern Michigan	MAC	9	Eagles (7-6) broke .500 for first time since 1995; 16 starters are back.
104.	Rutgers	Big Ten	14	In late April, Rutgers added Louisville grad transfer QB Kyle Bolin.
105.	Old Dominion	C-USA	6	ODU shared East title at 7-1 last season but needs a new QB.
106.	Louisiana	Sun Belt	7	Probably hovering around bowl eligibility; Cajuns eked in last year.
107.	FIU	C-USA	7	How long will it take for new coach Butch Davis to make FIU relevant?
108.	San Jose State	MW	9	Brent Brennan takes over program that went 4-8, needs a QB.
109.	East Carolina	AAC	10	Defense must make big strides to escape AAC East cellar.
110.	UNLV	MW	10	Tony Sanchez (7-17, 2 years) doesn't have a QB with college snap.
111.	Fresno State	MW	11	Good: Jeff Tedford is back coaching football. Bad: 9-game MW skid.
112.	Marshall	C-USA	8	Plummeted to 3-9 last year after three seasons with double-digit Ws.
113.	Nevada	MW	12	New coach Jay Norvell brings a passing vibe to run-based Pack.
114.	UConn	AAC	11	Randy Edsall returns for second stint, hoping to energize the offense.
115.	Rice	C-USA	9	Trending the wrong way, from 10 wins to eight to five to three.
116.	North Texas	C-USA	10	Qualified for bowl last season at 5-7, thanks to academic progress rate.
117.	Georgia State	Sun Belt	8	New coach Shawn Elliott takes over after a 3-9 season in Atlanta.
118.	Tulane	AAC	12	Goal is a bowl after going 4-8 in Willie Fritz's debut season.
119.	New Mexico State	Sun Belt	9	RB Larry Rose III (3,618 career yards) leads farewell season in Sun Belt.
120.	FAU	C-USA	11	The latest landing spot for Lane Kiffin after good run as Bama OC.
121.	Kent State	MAC	10	Offense (20.6 ppg) likely to struggle again after 3-9 season.
122.	UTEP	C-USA	12	OG Will Hernandez is a good one, but standout RB Aaron Jones is gone.
123.	Charlotte	C-USA	13	Hard time doing better than four wins in third season at FBS level.
124.	Buffalo	MAC	11	Went 2-10 last season, lacking the offensive punch needed in MAC.
125.	Akron	MAC	12	Zips won bowl in 2015, but slipped back to 5-7 last season.
126.	Coastal Carolina	Sun Belt	10	Coach Joe Moglia ushers Chanticleers into new digs in the FBS.
127.	Louisiana-Monroe	Sun Belt	11	Just four wins last year, but Alabama transfer RB Derrick Gore helps.
128.	Texas State	Sun Belt	12	Mississippi State grad transfer Damian Williams takes over at QB.
129.	UAB	C-USA	14	Blazers are back, baby! Program returns after two-year absence.
130.	UMass	Ind	4	Posted only one FBS victory in 2016, its first year as independent.

THE CROWD IN THE CORNER

IN THE SUNSHINE STATE, ONLY HIGH-PROFILE COACHES NEED APPLY

BY DENNIS DODD

Let's put the top down and take a drive around the new state of Florida football.

From Orlando, west to Tampa, down to South Florida and back up the Gold Coast on I-95, that's roughly 600 miles. Within its borders are owners of a combined two Super Bowl rings, eight national championships and 10 SEC titles. For starters.

Total time of those five guys in their current jobs — exactly two years. That reflects the playing and coaching accomplishments of Lane Kiffin (Florida Atlantic), Butch Davis (Florida International), Charlie Strong (South Florida), Scott Frost (Central Florida) and Mark Richt (Miami).

And we're not even including Jimbo Fisher or Jim McElwain in this new state of the state of Florida.

When no one was looking, that new border was drawn — more emotional than physical. Three of the five coaches — Kiffin, Strong and Davis — are starting their first seasons. Richt and Frost enter Year 2 at their schools.

Howard Schnellenberger used to have the State of Miami. This is bigger. This is ... well, yuge.

All of them are looking to establish, extend and/or rehabilitate their careers. They've crammed into arguably the most football-rich region in the nation and have gone about staking their claims.

Even at little ol' FIU, which has two winning seasons since 2002.

"Everybody," said Davis, out of coaching since 2011 after being fired at North Carolina, "gets a fresh start."

It didn't take Strong as long to find that fresh start. Just days after being fired at Texas, he re-emerged at South Florida.

After a long slog out of the game, Davis finally found his way back by returning to *South Florida*. Remember, he shepherded Miami through a crippling probation in the 1990s.

Frost is coming off a 6-7 debut at Central Florida, where he had inherited an 0-12 team.

Tired of competing against his own accomplishments at Georgia, Richt enters his second year at Miami, which is quickly trending upward. Richt's 9-4 debut matched the most wins at Miami (for the fifth time, actually) since 2003.

But the headlines, if not the state's football, will revolve around Kiffin. The 42-year-old wild child chose an unlikely landing spot, Boca Raton, for his reboot.

LANE KIFFIN, FAU
Photo by Jason Getz-USA TODAY Sports

Usually an Alabama offensive coordinator fresh off three straight SEC titles, having brought Nick Saban's offense to record-setting levels, doesn't cash in his head coaching chips in Boca.

He vacations there.

In reality, though, FAU is something close to a professional last chance for Kiffin. Great stadium, great climate, great campus ... suspect prospects. The only guarantee is, if FAU doesn't win big with Kiffin, everyone will still get a heck of a sideshow.

"This was not about becoming a head coach," Kiffin said upon taking the job. "I was very happy at Alabama and what we were doing there."

Uh-huh. Cecil Hurt of the *Tuscaloosa News* probably went as far as anyone could on Twitter, saying of Kiffin and Alabama that "staying put for 2017 wasn't going to happen..."

Wait, what? Kiffin wasn't desperate about getting a head coaching job *and* he wasn't welcome back at Alabama?

Let's just say there were few tears shed in Saban's office when the news came down. One University of South Florida source said Kiffin was a "non-starter" for the job that eventually went to Strong.

Kiffin interviewed at Houston but lost out to the Cougars' offensive coordinator, Major Applewhite, who will be a rookie head coach. There was reported interest at Maryland last year. Kiffin didn't get that either.

Instead, the man who helped Carson Palmer, Reggie Bush, Matt Leinart and Derrick Henry win Heismans is an Owl. The coach who was handed the keys to the Oakland Raiders at age 32 is starting over before he reaches middle age.

Tennessee's former one-and-done coach takes over a program that is 26 years younger than he is. FAU started playing football under Schnellenberger in 2001.

"FAU is the best opportunity for a guy his age who has some scars along the way," Schnellie said. "It's a perfect place for him to do something extraordinary."

The scars are well known, if not visible.

Kiffin was a wunderkind under Pete Carroll at USC, a flop with the Raiders. After

whatever Tennessee was, and the USC thing went belly-up quick, and then there was the puzzling, soaring, weird, highly successful three-year stay at Alabama. In three years, Kiffin coached/developed three different starting quarterbacks, helped win three SEC titles, one national championship, and had a whole lot of cameras trained on him on the sideline.

"I get my ass chewings from time to time (from Saban)," Kiffin said. "I've learned to accept those."

That wild child now says he wants to emulate Saban and prove to the world he can be a CEO coach, a delegator who diligently organizes and runs a program.

Stifle your laughs. Few would assign him any of those labels in the past. Ask Tennessee.

"The reality is he has a resume that is unique to himself," FAU athletic director Patrick Chun said.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity at a relatively young age. At the end of the day, that's what makes him such a compelling choice. You could see why he was so great with recruits. What sold me the most, the trait that sold me was how humble he was."

Humble? This is a man who taunted Urban Meyer at Tennessee. This is a man who was fired on an airport tarmac at USC.

This is a man who, by now, deserves another chance. Separated by 50 years, both Schnellenberger and Kiffin won national championships as offensive coordinators at Alabama.

"If Nick Saban had won this national championship game," Schnellenberger said in January, "he'd be considered the greatest coach of all time. It's hard to say what Lane's value to that was. It certainly wasn't negative."

Only when you read all that backwards does it make total sense. You *start* at a place like FAU and end up in the NFL. Kiffin is *starting over* at FAU because some level of desperation has set in. On both sides.

FAU is desperate for attention; Kiffin is desperate to jump-start himself as a head coach.

Both sides go in with their eyes wide open. Chun knew what he was getting when he read a revealing SI.com story in December. In it, author Pete Thamel not only spent the day house hunting with the new coach, but he went house hunting at the suggestion of the new coach.

What we learned ...

—While at USC, Kiffin and wife Layla owned a house they eventually sold to actor Vince Vaughn.

BUTCH DAVIS, FIU
Photo by Steve Mitchell-USA TODAY Sports

JIMBO FISHER, FSU
Photo by Logan Bowles-USA TODAY Sports

MARK RICHT, MIAMI
Photo by Logan Bowles-USA TODAY Sports

—His neighbors in Manhattan Beach included Duck Dynasty creators Scott and Dierdre Gurney.

—Kiffin felt like he was in a fishbowl in Tuscaloosa. "This will come across wrong," he said, "but it's like dog years. Three years is like 21."

—Lane took a pay cut to become a head coach. He made $1.4 million as OC at Alabama, only $950,000 at FAU.

That topic led to the money quote of the year from Kiffin via SI.com.

"I used to say there's a constantly daily battle between who can take more of my money between Layla and Obama," said Kiffin, who is now divorced. "I figured it out. I really don't make any money. I pay around 52% in taxes. Layla gets 34.5% in the divorce, and (agent Jimmy Sexton) gets 3%. I make (about) 9% and I'm living in Tuscaloosa."

Who lays their private life out there so bare? Kiffin.

"Sitting down with the president, we went over every piece of information we found, good, bad, or indifferent," Chun said. "The thought at the time was, 'He's grown up.' He gives you a sense of maturity when maybe the book was immaturity."

Whether Kiffin fails or soars, FAU raises its profile in a college football world where the difference between the haves and have-nots has never been greater.

All of it has focused attention on the bottom right corner of the map for different football reasons. In any given season, there are championship aspirations somewhere in Florida.

Gators' coach Jim McElwain has won consecutive SEC East titles. And he's sick of apologizing for winning those division titles. With a serviceable quarterback (Feleipe Franks?) there may be some entertainment value to a usually bland offense.

Jimbo Fisher is entering the meat of his career having re-established FSU as a national power. In 2017, Florida State might be the class of the conference that ended 2016 No. 1, the ACC.

There might be enough distance and conference diversity between them, that all of them can succeed.

But there is something different, something deeper with the addition of all the new faces.

UCF and USF will play each other.

Miami goes to Florida State.

FSU vs. Florida is a staple.

FIU plays FAU ... and UCF.

This continual game of scrum is not going to go away. And the storyline figures to only get louder.

So why are they all here, crowding into one corner of the map?

Simple: One of every 99 high school players in Florida signs a Division I scholarship, according to UCF research. Compare that to California and Texas,

runners-up at one in 400.

There is no lack of bravado.

"Not to take anything away from Nick Saban," Frost said last year, "but when you have the No. 1 recruiting class in the country every year and you can put them through a process, you've got a great chance.

"When Chip (Kelly) started to do what he was doing at Oregon, we had a huge advantage because no one had ever seen it before. It's to the point now that a lot of people are running versions of what we do. I still believe in Chip's scheme and Oregon's scheme."

SCOTT FROST, UCF
Photo by Steve Mitchell-USA TODAY Sports

The Knights went to a bowl with the 6-6 regular season, which is progress in a league (American Athletic Conference) hoping at some point to be in a "Power 6."

UCF president John C. Hitt can hardly contain himself waiting to recite his school's attributes: Orlando is the fastest-growing top-30 metro area, and has an impressive collection of merit scholars (second most in the state). Freshmen average 1,261 on the SAT.

"I would see this as a bet on UCF is a bet on the future," said Hitt, who has been around since 1992, having conferred degrees on 238,000 of the school's 280,000 living alumni.

One hundred miles down the road and 14 years older than Frost sits Charlie Strong. He is less of an American Athletic Conference rival than a heart-warming rebound story.

To recount, USF's new coach spent only 19 days between being fired at Texas and being hired at South Florida.

"I became a fan of Jerry Springer," Strong said of that jobless stretch. "I was trying to find a way to laugh. It was hard in the beginning moving past it. You want to be successful so bad."

He then asked himself, "Would you allow this to define who you really are?"

The internal dialogue didn't last long after leaving behind a 16-21 three-year record at Texas.

"That's why I didn't sit out. I just wanted to get back into it. I was like, 'This damn job will take my mind away from (what happened),'" Strong said in a quiet moment.

There is a new level of comfort. There is no shadow mafia of Texas boosters out to get him. Perhaps it's because he is back "home," in the state of Florida, where Strong has spent 15 years of his career.

Perhaps it's the myriad of the state's high school coaches — and their talent — he can tap into with quick phone calls. Perhaps it's inheriting an 11-win team with a Heisman candidate at quarterback (Quinton Flowers). This is no rebuild. It's a rebirth.

USF athletic director Mark Harlan was convinced after watching Strong's final weekly press conference at Texas.

"He walked off the stage basically into the arms of that team," Harlan said. "That to me was all I needed to know about the Texas situation."

Behind the scenes, there is another compelling need for Strong to be at USF. Yeah, he's a coach who needed to scratch an itch. Yeah, he's suddenly at a program that may be closer to a New Year's Six bowl in 2017 than Texas.

But 45 minutes north of Tampa, well, the deal was sealed. The parents of Strong's wife Victoria live close. Victoria's mother was diagnosed with dementia about 14 years ago, Strong said.

"We were at South Carolina," Strong said, recalling his time with the Gamecocks from 1999 to 2002. "You could see it was happening then. ... It started then and we just didn't know."

And then it got worse as these cases always do. Anyone who has a loved one affected by Alzheimer's/dementia, it's heart-rending to see their personality drift away along with their memory.

"It's good we came back."

FLORIDA'S FINEST

A look at the seven FBS coaches in the Sunshine State, ranked by career victories:

Coach	School	Career record	Pct.	Record at school
Mark Richt	Miami	154-55, 16 years	73.7	9-4, 1 year
Butch Davis	FIU	79-43, 10 years	64.8	First year
Jimbo Fisher	Florida State	78-17, 7 years	82.1	78-17, 7 years
Charlie Strong	USF	53-37, 7 years	58.9	First year
Jim McElwain	Florida	41-24, 5 years	63.1	19-8, 2 years
Lane Kiffin	FAU	35-21, 5 years	62.5	First year
Scott Frost	UCF	6-7, 1 year	46.2	6-7, 1 year

In 2001 and again in 2009, Strong said the fact that Victoria is white hurt his chances of getting a head coaching job. Now with seven years as a head coach, Strong brought up the subject of race again.

It matters to Strong since he was the first black head coach of a men's program at Texas. It matters to Strong that he is the second African-American FBS head coach to get another head coaching job after being fired. Tyrone Willingham — Notre Dame to Washington — was the other.

"When you're the first black coach at a place like that, there's so many people counting on you. You want to see it happen," Strong said. "If I'm successful as a minority (it's going to help someone) who wants to go run and be the CEO of IBM, or there's a minority who wants to go run a hospital."

Not only that but in a sport known for its lack of coaching diversity, Harlan replaced one African-American head coach (Willie Taggart) with another.

"These (are) little things that didn't even cross my mind," Harlan said.

Strong remains successful, despite departing with the worst winning percentage of any Texas coach. That may be a stain he can never wipe away. He won a couple of national championships with Florida, guided Louisville to a Sugar Bowl win.

His last two Texas recruiting classes were top 10, leading Strong to say on his way out the door, "The cake has been baked. You just put the icing on it." (Your move Tom Herman.)

"His body of work far superseded any two or three years at any place," Harlan said. "He's been nothing but terrific."

This is a new chapter for all these guys, and it amounts to a new chapter in the state's football history. What can we expect within these new borders?

If you follow the game at all, you can't help but check scores from the Sunshine State.

We already know Florida State will open the season projected by *Lindy's* to be in the College Football Playoff. With any quarterback play at all, Florida could win a third straight SEC East crown.

Strong's Bulls are the favorite to snag that New Year's Six bowl that goes to the highest-ranked Group of Five conference champion.

Davis wants to double-deck 23,500-seat FIU Stadium. The last we saw of him in South Florida, he was departing Miami a week before 2001 national signing day. By that time, he had set the table for a national championship.

In the 15 years since then, Davis has a combined four winning seasons in the NFL and college. Although his name was not in the NCAA public infractions report that put the program on probation, North Carolina officials let him go in July 2011.

When the Panthers go to UCF for the season opener Sept. 2, Davis will not have coached a game in seven years. It shouldn't matter. He knows. Some of the old rules apply inside the new state of Florida football.

Top down, hit the road.

"Pull off any road on I-95, I swear there's someone at the high school that runs a 4.5," Davis said upon being hired. "We're going to get some of those."

And so, apparently, will everybody else. Now, if they can just build a big, beautiful wall around the place to keep out the likes of Alabama, Georgia, et al. ... there might be enough players to go around.

CHARLIE STRONG, USF
Photo by Shanna Lockwood-USA TODAY Sports

JIM MCELWAIN, FLORIDA
Photo by Logan Bowles-USA TODAY Sports

THE STATE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Don't let a series of offseason web oddities distract you from the fact that the state of Oklahoma has two teams capable of winning the national championship this season.

Never mind the viral video of Oklahoma quarterback and Heisman Trophy finalist Baker Mayfield not getting very far while trying to outrun Fayetteville, Ark., cops.

Erase the image – if you can – of Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy, dressed in an orange singlet, in a video to promote a Cowboys' wrestling meet. And there he is describing rattlesnake hunting: "If you get a six-footer, that's like catching a 12-pound bass. I want my 12-year old to get it and he can put up the skin on his wall."

Some of this is the stuff of lowest-common-denominator social media. In the case of Gundy, sure, some of it is self-generated. At the other end of the spectrum, his Sooners counterpart, the more-stoic Bob Stoops, was still trying to deal with the answer for the ugly Joe Mixon situation (the video of him punching a female and breaking her jaw led to a lawsuit settled the week before the 2017 draft).

But in the heartland, even social media and controversy can't wipe away what long-term dedication has produced on the field.

Loyalty and permanence do mean something significant here. Gundy and Stoops have been at the one and only head coaching jobs they've ever had for a combined 30 years. That's a dozen for Gundy, and 18 for Stoops, who is the nation's longest-tenured FBS coach.

Oklahoma finished last season No. 7 in the final College Football Playoff rankings. The Sooners are, at the least, top-10 timber once again. Oklahoma State, with a load of returning offensive riches, is coming off its fifth season in the last seven with at least 10 wins.

The two coaches have never finished together in the top 10. For the schools separated by 80 miles on a ribbon of highway, this could be the year.

"OU has been the team," Gundy said. "Nobody has taken it from them. It's like preseason. You have to say, 'OK, Alabama is No. 1 up until someone has beat them.' It's like (Muhammad) Ali: Someone is going to be the favorite until someone beats him."

A gruffer Stoops was short when asked about that team up north. It was

BOB STOOPS, OKLAHOMA
Photo by Ben Queen-USA TODAY Sports

MIKE GUNDY, OKLAHOMA STATE
Photo by Soobum Im-USA TODAY Sports

a reminder these two coaches are always trying to beat the other's brains in.

"We'll pay attention like we did last year when that (Bedlam) week comes," he said. "I don't pay attention to anybody."

The Big 12 race begins here. Not only are the Cowboys and Sooners the top two teams, they could meet twice. The league is bringing back its championship game after playing a true round-robin conference schedule. So, this fabled Bedlam series could get doubly ornery.

Stoops is coming off his 10th conference title, attempting to win the third in a row. It's fair to label Oklahoma State a little brother. Its only Big 12 title came in 2011, when it missed a BCS title shot by .0083 of a point.

But under Gundy, the Cowboys are numbingly consistent. They have won at least eight games in nine of the past 10 seasons, with double-digit win totals five times.

There are reasons to anticipate an all-time race in the state.

Oklahoma has Mayfield, who is on track to become the most efficient passer in NCAA history. Stoops has already heard all the jokes about Mayfield's public intoxication bust: The elusive quarterback may have taken his toughest hit in his career from the cops in that video.

"I've heard that one, too," Stoops said. "I'm not laughing about it."

But Oklahoma State is giddy over Mason Rudolph, the nation's third-leading returning passer. In the Big 12, if you have a quarterback you have a chance.

"Players rally around him because he plays injured," Gundy said. "He played in the (2016) Sugar Bowl with a broken foot. He wasn't ready. He couldn't practice. I put him out there. I shouldn't (have)."

Where Stoops and Gundy go from here is an open-ended question. Stoops, 56, has lived longer in Norman than his native Youngstown, Ohio. He leads Iowa's Kirk Ferentz by one day as that longest-tenured coach at one place.

"Done the right way, you want it to be your whole career," Stoops said. "How many teams sell out for 19 straight years?"

As for Gundy's future, well, there is constant chatter about his ebbing and flowing relationship with Oklahoma State benefactor T. Boone Pickens.

But what else are Gundy and the Cowboys going to do? He's the Steve Spurrier of Stillwater — the school's former quarterback now coaching his alma mater.

Oklahoma State has enjoyed unprecedented success in Gundy's 12 seasons. Just not as much as Stoops. The school would be stupid to get rid of him. And Gundy isn't going anywhere. Until later ... "Ultimately, I'd like to do some TV stuff," Gundy said.

"My only concern is ... you guys in the journalism profession work long days. Do I want to work a long day? If I do more wrestling stuff and rattlesnake hunts, my market value goes up."

— *Dennis Dodd*

MAKE A PLAY FOR GORDO'S.®

Dip into the authentic taste of Gordo's Cheese Dip made with real cheese.

Try all six Cheese Dips: Original, Mild, Hot, Cheese'n Salsa, Chipotle and the newest favorite Yellow Queso.

gordoscheesedip.com

Find us on Facebook | Follow us on Twitter

GORDO'S CHEESE DIP
AUTHENTIC MEXICAN RESTAURANT STYLE

THE STATE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

These are not quite heady times in Texas or *at* Texas.

In-state talent is leaving like crazy. And players who stay in Texas just aren't winning very many football games these days.

No team from Texas finished in the AP Top 25 last season.

No team from Texas is really considered a hot riser in this year's preseason Top 25.

Kevin Sumlin is on the hot seat at Texas A&M. Kliff Kingsbury at Texas Tech may be headed there. Both Houston and Texas lost their coaches. Ah, but that's where the Lone Star story shifts.

The same coach who left Houston is the same coach who took over for Charlie Strong at Texas. Tom Herman is the new face of football in Texas and *at* Texas.

On the surface, Texas inherited a wonder-boy rock star with two years of head-coaching experience. But what he inherited was just starting to hit home during his first Signing Day in Austin.

For the first time in a long time, Texas failed to sign a top 10 player from its own state. In fact, three of the top six players in Texas ended up with Urban Meyer, Herman's old boss at Ohio State.

When the letters of intent were collected, Herman had assembled the lowest-ranked Texas class in the history of the 247Sports Composite rankings (since 1999). It was 26th.

"A year from now, are we going to be there?" Herman asked. "Absolutely."

He might be right, but there's a clean-up to be done here.

"Things were going so good for so long, (some thought), 'I can just roll in with this logo and just bow down and people are going to want to go to school there,'" Herman said.

"These kids that we're signing in the Class of 2017, since they've been 11 years old they've seen two winning seasons of Texas football. Four out of the last six have been seven-loss seasons."

Harsh but true. Herman wasn't done.

"In '05, these kids were 5 years old. These kids don't know who Vince Young was."

Texas is like the Yankees or the Lakers or Cowboys. There's no such thing as overachieving. Those franchises are expected to win big every year. Anything less is underachieving.

KEVIN SUMLIN, TEXAS A&M
Photo by Troy Taormina-USA TODAY Sports

TOM HERMAN, TEXAS
Photo by John Gutierrez-USA TODAY Sports

H-Town Takeover? This is Texas' makeover.

Charlie Strong left behind consecutive top-10 recruiting classes. That was also part of his undoing. Even with that talent, Strong departed with the worst winning percentage in school history (16-21, .432).

But it isn't just at the flagship university: There are challenges all over the state.

It was just in 2015 that the state of Texas produced three teams among the top 13 in the final AP poll. TCU was seventh. Houston, eighth. Baylor landed at 13 ... and then in a lot of hot water.

The Horned Frogs fell back to 6-7 last season, although that is a no-panic program under Gary Patterson. No need to fret about that. Houston expected to be the best of the Group of Five teams last season, but couldn't recapture that magic and now starts over with Major Applewhite as head coach.

Baylor reeled from a sexual assault scandal. Texas Tech has been throwing the ball and treading water, going 24-26 under Kingsbury. Sumlin is under fire because he hasn't been able to finish. His Aggies went 2-5 down the stretch last season after going 3-5 in the final eight games of 2015 and 2014.

It's hard to see an uprising of quick, major turnarounds.

Since winning the national title in 2005, the Longhorns have won just one Big 12 title. This is where Herman comes in. He arrived in Austin in 1999 as a graduate assistant, fresh from Texas Lutheran as a Division III receivers coach. Four stops later, Herman was still paying off student loans from when he left Iowa State for Ohio State in 2012.

Winning a national championship at Ohio State with a third-string quarterback catapulted him to stardom.

He is part of an overall Texas upgrade — everywhere. Herman basically got whatever he wanted, installing new lockers (each with a flat screen TV?!) at $10,000 a pop. There will be $2 million worth of changes to the weight room.

How Texas could fall so far behind in the arms race boggles the mind. They almost fell hopelessly behind in the race for Herman.

Texas president Greg Fenves and athletic director Mike Perrine came in way late in the coaching search mating dance. LSU reportedly was way down the road in negotiating with Herman in late November.

Fenves and Perrine landed their guy after an all-night interview, negotiating session that lasted until 4 a.m.

"They literally haven't told me no yet," Herman said in the offseason.

Yes, but very soon they'll be asking for a lot more than what Strong gave them.

— *Dennis Dodd*

Football is here. Wayne Root is here. And one word makes the perfect connection

MILLIONAIRE

Understand from the start you can't be a millionaire unless you're ready to take a big bite out of life. How big are your chops? Me? I'm ready to swallow Vegas in one gulp! Crazy? It goes with the territory!

You can't put a customer's money at risk unless you have monstrous self-confidence. You have to have an **unswerving** belief that you are about to save his weekend, his retirement and his dynasty. That is how I feel about you! And I back it up with a documented record in the sealed archives of **The Sports Monitor!** – The most unimpeachable documenting authority in sports betting! You've got to wonder ***"How can any person be that sharp."***

BUT Wayne Allyn Root is NOT one person. Any more than Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos. Microsoft was not the work of one man but a thousand-man team of programmers who all became millionaires under Bill Gates' direction. Amazon was a small warehouse going nowhere till Jeff Bezos figured out how to make them rich through the Internet.

Well, I have figured out how to make you rich – if you have the ambition and the stick intuitiveness. After all, if we're both playing the same games, why can't we both make the same money? And don't tell me, "Ah, Wayne you bet bigger than I do." **I'VE BEEN IN YOUR SHOES!**

I started from ground zero. Son of a butcher in Mt. Vernon, New York. All I had was the American Dream and a determination to prove I could double my money in one afternoon. And I did it! I started with nothing. Today my footprints are on Las Vegas's Walk of the Stars- I'm the only handicapper or odds-maker EVER honored. *My Rags to Riches* story even tickles Wall Street. The result- the biggest TV shows on networks like *CNBC & Fox Business, the Wall Street Journal, CNNMoney, Fortune, Equities, Worth, & Crains NY Business* have all featured Wayne Allyn Root. The national media thinks Wayne Allyn Root is a big time story.

And now it's YOUR turn to benefit

In fact, you're in a better position than I was. When I started out, (1985), my talent was ***raw*** - still in the formative stages! By now you have the complete, mature Wayne Allyn Root picking for you, with most of my mistakes behind me.

So you don't have to have fabulous numbers or seasoned judgment. You don't need x's & o's and man matchups and an instinct when to go against the crowd. You don't have to study a book or method or read up on sports or browse the Internet. All you have to do is play the games I give you. And with a regularity that will amaze and delight you, ***I will make you rich.***

Call me right now and I will enroll you in my No Limit Club (that went 32-14-1-70% last season). There are *No Limits* on how much you can win... You may even become a millionaire like me!

I will give you all of the NFL Pre-Season plus all of September – plus fringe benefits - all for only $129! Or come in for the Full Season for just $249. That's half off the regular season price of $499. Get listed at:

1-877-ROOT WINS

That's 1-877-766-8946 or call /text 702-205-9800

VISA MasterCard PayPal DISCOVER AMERICAN EXPRESS

www.WinningEdge.com

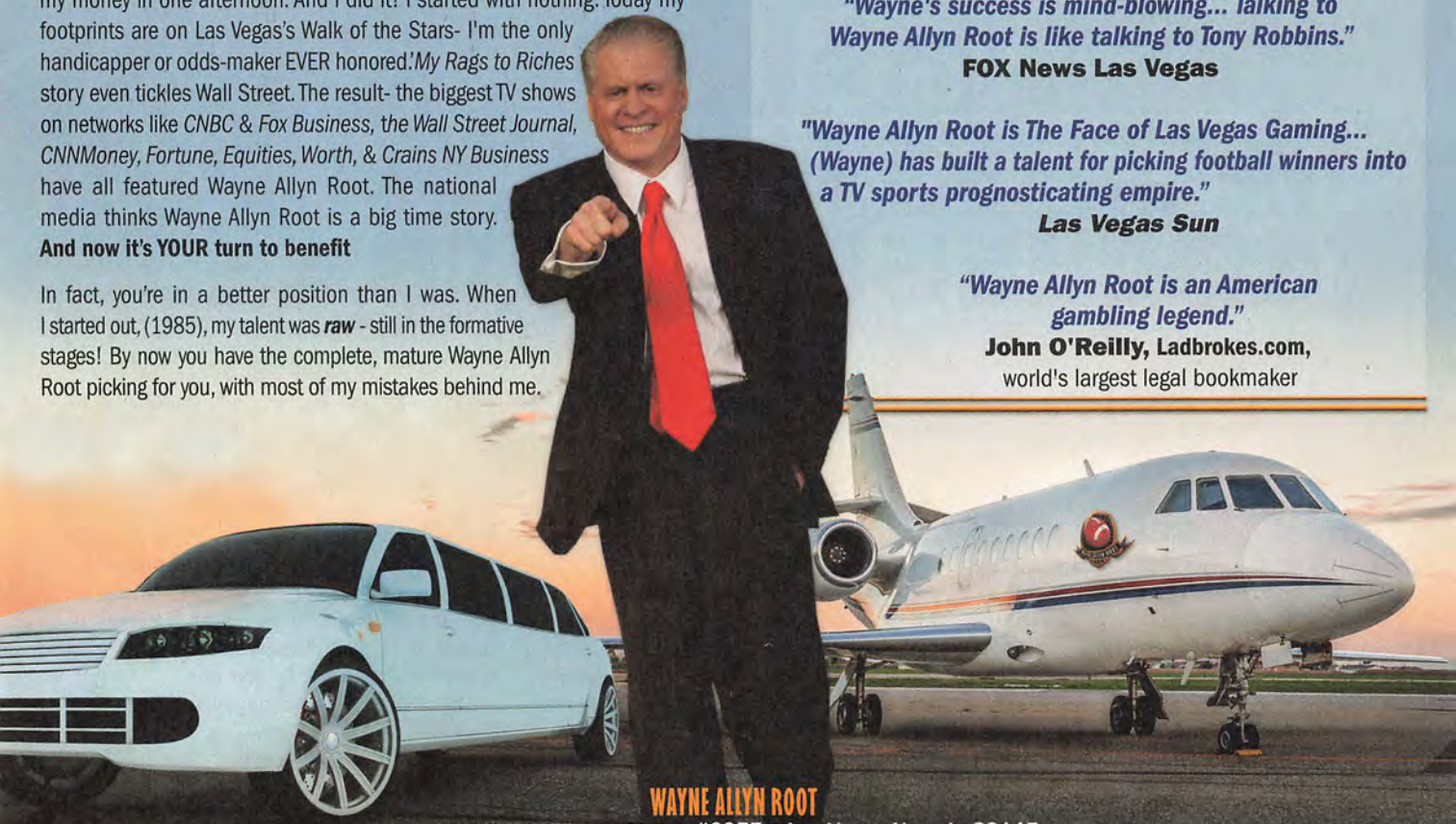
WAYNE ALLYN ROOT

"Wayne's the king of handicappers... He's the Warren Buffett of his world." **James J. Cramer,** CNBC's "Mad Money"

"Wayne's success is mind-blowing... Talking to Wayne Allyn Root is like talking to Tony Robbins."
FOX News Las Vegas

"Wayne Allyn Root is The Face of Las Vegas Gaming... (Wayne) has built a talent for picking football winners into a TV sports prognosticating empire."
Las Vegas Sun

"Wayne Allyn Root is an American gambling legend."
John O'Reilly, Ladbrokes.com,
world's largest legal bookmaker



WAYNE ALLYN ROOT
1027 South Rainbow Blvd. ■ #605F ■ Las Vegas Nevada 89145

THE MOST INTERESTING MAN IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Ex-CEO Moglia earning even more dividends in 2017

BY JON GOLD

Photos by Jeff Blake-USA TODAY

Joe Moglia, who once presided over client assets worth more than $300 billion, yearned to be a college football head coach, preferably somewhere in Division I. He was a salesman with a pitch.

Sometimes, it fell on deaf ears.

"One college president someone set me up with — and this guy is a good outside-the-box thinker — he said I could never hire you," Moglia said.

"He said you don't know the pressure. All these rules, you can't step across compliance. I said first of all, I know all the rules; I passed the tests; I understood them the first time around. But I reported to the SEC. If I screw up as a coach, I lose some scholarships. If I screw up on Wall Street,
I go to jail. I found that mind-boggling."

Yes, whether it's the Securities and Exchange Commission, or maybe someday taking on the Southeastern Conference, Moglia can handle it all just fine.

He's the Most Interesting Man in College Football.

And he's more relevant now that he's in

the Football Bowl Subdivision.

After one of the most successful runs for a CEO in recent Wall Street history — leading TD Ameritrade to record profits — Moglia traded in the boardroom for the film room, business suits for windbreakers. He now leads Coastal Carolina into its first season in the Sun Belt, with a 51-15 record under his belt in five seasons, and with two top-10 FCS finishes.

Guiding the Chanticleers into the choppy waters of big-time college football? You think that's tough?

Try shooting for 500 percent returns on investment.

"What I did with TD Ameritrade, it would've been like winning two or three national championships in a row. But not Alabama winning titles. That's like Wake Forest winning three championships in a row," he said. "That's not a knock on Wake. If Wake won three in a row, how significant would that be?

"But I wasn't just some guy who wanted to get his rocks off getting into football."

In 1983, after 16 years as a high school and college football coach — eventually climbing the ladder to become Dartmouth's defensive coordinator from 1981-83 — Moglia entered the world of high finance.

How high?

By the time he left his post as CEO of TD Ameritrade in 2008, which followed a 17-year run with Merrill Lynch, his client assets totaled over $300 billion.

He was ready for a new challenge, and eager to get back into football. He joined Bo Pelini and the Nebraska Cornhuskers as an unpaid volunteer assistant coach, became head coach of the Virginia Destroyers of the United Football League in November 2010, then slid over to the Omaha Nighthawks in 2011 as president and head coach.

He wanted more.

In December 2011, he got his wish when the Chanticleers came calling, and he was tabbed to replace David Bennett. Coastal Carolina went 8-5 in Moglia's first season, then 24-5 the next two years, followed by an 19-5 run the last two.

The team's success trickled throughout the school. Coastal Carolina won the 2016 College World Series. The Chanticleers men's basketball team advanced to the 2017 CBI tournament finals in March.

In 2015, the university decided to move up to the FBS ranks. After playing the 2016 season as an FCS independent, with a schedule that included FCS and FBS programs, the Chanticleers join the Sun Belt Conference in 2017, with their season opener on Sept. 2 against Massachusetts.

Some coaches would be wary of the task ahead. Not Moglia.

"I feel really solid about the base upon which the program is built," Moglia said. "We have philosophies in place, strategies, preparation. The reality is we don't change any of those."

No, but they might look a little strange in the rough-and-tumble world of the FBS.

Coastal Carolina practices are run with the organization of a shipping fulfillment center. FedEx is less organized. The Chanticleers practice on two fields, so that both the first team and the backups get plenty of reps. They also rarely tackle, and Moglia is known for his willingness to go for it on fourth down when other coaches would kick.

"When you're hitting all day in practice, you produce more injuries, and we try to limit as much of that as possible," said fifth-year senior wide receiver Chris Jones, the team's leading returning receiver and returner. "It's about taking care of your players. I've been here five years, and I haven't really had an injury."

This kind of innovative thinking might not fly at some of the blue-blood programs out there, but for Moglia and his squad, it works. Can't argue with the results.

"Every coach knows what you begin with in August won't be your team by September, and not by October and definitely not November," Moglia said.

"We very seldom hit in practice. We have very intense practices, but they're well-organized. Let's make believe on a scale of 10 reps; usually the first team gets seven and the second gets three. Here, our first and second are getting eight, and the third- and fourth-string get two."

How will that style play in FBS? The Chanticleers will find out soon. But maybe not the hard way. The latest of 10 college football programs that have bumped up from the FCS ranks since 2012, Coastal Carolina hopes to follow the path of South Alabama, Appalachian State, Texas-San Antonio, Georgia State and Old Dominion, which each went to bowl games in their first few seasons.

"We still prepare how we always have," Jones said. "We've brought in guys who knew they were D-I level. We have a bunch of guys who always knew we could do this. This is just the opportunity. Now we've got to get out and play and show we can do this."

For the 68-year-old Moglia, it's all about maintaining the identity that Coastal Carolina has formed in his six-plus years with the team.

For Moglia, himself, he found it long ago.

Raised on the streets of New York to an Irish immigrant mother and Italian immigrant father who sold bananas and apples, Moglia, the oldest of five children, worked his way out of the gutter. Seven people in a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment. Two of his best friends died before he finished high school — one in a liquor store robbery — and, he says, "The reason I wasn't the guy robbing the liquor store was because I was playing high school football."

"I used to think then as a 14-15 year old, I said to myself, 'Dad you're miserable all the time; why would you let yourself do something you really can't stand?'" he said. "I said when I was a teenager, 'No way I'm going to do something I don't really enjoy.' Why would I ever do something I didn't enjoy?"

Back in football for a second go-around and leading a team to the highest level of the game, Moglia is definitely having a blast.

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT JOE MOGLIA

- Spent 17 years at Merrill Lynch before becoming CEO at TD Ameritrade in 2001.
- Only person to have books published on investing and on football strategy.
- Won 2015 Eddie Robinson FCS National Coach of the Year award.
- Had Coastal Carolina ranked No. 1 in FCS during 2014 season.
- Has been featured on 60 Minutes.

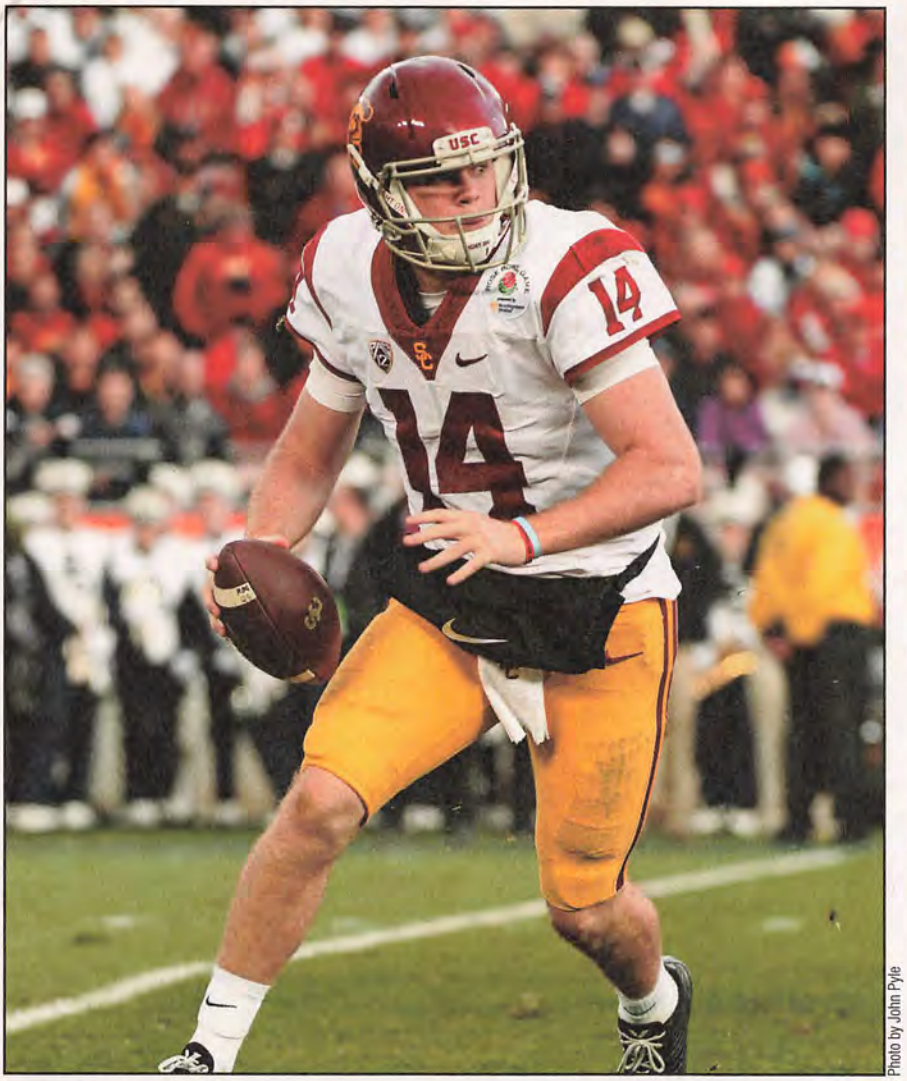


Photo by John Pyle

Trojans QB Darnold Always Plays it Cool

By Scott Wolf

Quarterback Sam Darnold boarded a private jet in February to fly to Columbus, Ohio, to accept the Archie Griffin Award. He wore the scruffy black Vans shoes he donned many days at USC.

The college football world — including *Lindy's* — has rolled out the red carpet for the hottest quarterback in the country, but Darnold resists the temptation to act like a celebrity at every turn.

"I don't think I have to change," Darnold said. "I think I can definitely just remain myself."

Darnold is laid-back, calm and unlikely to go out of his way to say anything ... unless he wants to tell a wide receiver where to break on a route. But it is Darnold's demeanor that helps make him special.

He rarely gets flustered by a defense. He keeps a laser-like focus on his receivers. He does not panic.

"As mobile as he is, as heady as he is, keeping his eyes down the field the way that he can, that's what makes him special," said Jim Mora, coach of USC rival UCLA. "He can elude the rush, keep his eyes up and find receivers down the field."

What Darnold cannot elude are massive expectations, including being *Lindy's* preseason Offensive Player of the Year. He is also the consensus pick of oddsmakers to win the Heisman Trophy. He is widely considered the likely No. 1 pick in the 2018 NFL draft, if he chooses to leave USC early.

So, yeah. No pressure.

"It's cool," Darnold said matter-of-factly of all the offseason chatter.

"But it doesn't matter until you play the season. I want to leave a legacy like (past USC great players). Hopefully I can be that role model for a kid out there who loves watching football."

Unlike some of USC's best-known players, most notably Heisman winners Matt Leinart and Reggie Bush, Darnold did not immediately embrace the trappings of fame once he became a national name. However, those who know Darnold are not surprised.

While he attended San Clemente High School, he did not want to play for a sponsored 7-on-7 passing team that is a staple for many blue-chip recruits. He also tried to avoid Nike camps, where recruiting services analyze every pass. Darnold preferred to be with his San Clemente teammates. That made him an under-the-radar recruit heading toward his senior year of high school.

His dream school was USC. He wasted no time committing when the Trojans finally offered a scholarship the summer before his senior year.

Darnold redshirted his freshman year, and his "what-me-worry?" attitude served him well when USC coach Clay Helton named Max Browne the starting quarterback before the 2016 season.

"I didn't agree with the decision, but I was going to help the team however I could," Darnold said.

Three games into the season, Helton made Darnold the starter. USC was 1-2 at the time. After the Trojans lost a close game at Utah, Darnold led the way to a nine-game winning streak that set up this season of high expectations.

Darnold just wanted to play once he was the starter, no matter the score.

He threw five touchdown passes during an easy 48-14 victory over Arizona but was unhappy when Helton took

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

him out of the game.

"Coach, there's more out there," Darnold said to Helton. "You saw the long balls in the first half. Guys were open and I missed them."

Darnold's season culminated with the Rose Bowl, a thrilling 52-49 victory over Penn State decided on a field goal on the final play of the game.

What does Darnold do for an encore? He quickly says he wants to win a national championship and does not care about his personal stats or glory.

When he made what looked like a risky pass to wide receiver Deontay Burnett that turned into a memorable 27-yard touchdown with 1:27 left in the Rose Bowl, Darnold merely saw it as the best chance to win the game.

"Records, you know, that doesn't mean much to me," Darnold said. "I want to win a national championship."

That desire to avoid some of last season's missteps at USC saw Darnold exert more leadership during spring practice.

"He's been a lot more vocal at what he likes and doesn't like (with the receivers)," USC quarterbacks coach Tyson Helton said.

And USC's young receiving corps knows it needs to learn the star quarterback's tendencies or risk falling behind.

"He'll do what you don't expect him to do," sophomore wide receiver Michael Pittman said. "That's what makes him special. I'm getting better thinking the way Sam thinks. He's definitely vocal. He'll say, 'Hey Pitt, break faster or run two steps instead of three.'

"He's going to be the one shelling out the ball, and I've got to get the timing down with him."

There is a certain sense of urgency because Darnold probably won't be around after this season. It's too soon to say what he will do, but it's hard to imagine any quarterback being rated higher.

"He reminds me of a younger Tony Romo," Mora said. "He is bigger, but has that type of ability. He's smart and poised and confident. He's a heck of a player."

OFFENSE

Sam Darnold

Saquon Barkley

Derrius Guice

James Washington

Christian Kirk

Troy Fumagalli

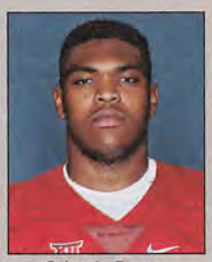
FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Sam Darnold	6-4	225	So.	USC
RB	Saquon Barkley	5-11	225	Jr.	Penn State
RB	Derrius Guice	5-11	212	Jr.	LSU
WR	James Washington	6-0	205	Sr.	Oklahoma State
WR	Christian Kirk	5-11	200	Jr.	Texas A&M
TE	Troy Fumagalli	6-6	249	Sr.	Wisconsin
C	Frank Ragnow	6-5	319	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	Orlando Brown	6-8	360	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Quenton Nelson	6-5	329	Sr.	Notre Dame
OL	Cody O'Connell	6-9	370	Sr.	Washington State
OL	Connor Williams	6-6	320	Jr.	Texas
K	Daniel Carlson	6-4	223	Sr.	Auburn

SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Lamar Jackson	6-3	200	Jr.	Louisville
RB	Ronald Jones II	6-1	195	Jr.	USC
RB	Kamryn Pettway	6-0	235	Jr.	Auburn
WR	Calvin Ridley	6-1	190	Jr.	Alabama
WR	Equanimeous St. Brown	6-5	204	Jr.	Notre Dame
TE	Mike Gesicki	6-6	253	Sr.	Penn State
C	Mason Cole	6-5	305	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Will Hernandez	6-3	330	Sr.	UTEP
OL	Mitch Hyatt	6-5	295	Jr.	Clemson
OL	Mike McGlinchey	6-8	312	Sr.	Notre Dame
OL	Braden Smith	6-6	303	Sr.	Auburn
K	Gary Wunderlich	6-0	193	Sr.	Ole Miss

Frank Ragnow


Orlando Brown

Quenton Nelson

Cody O'Connell

Connor Williams

Daniel Carlson

Photo by Mark LoMoglio/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

Return of 'Superman' Boosts FSU Defense, Playoff Hopes

By Bob Ferrante

Florida State safety Derwin James returned to the field with an edge this spring. His athleticism left teammates in awe. His knee was healthy. His hits were huge.

"He is all over the field," said Jacob Pugh, a senior defensive end. "He is Superman."

Well, leaving the other-worldly comparisons aside, James is *Lindy's* 2017 preseason Defensive Player of the Year — a rare, playmaking safety who can line up anywhere on the field and change offensive game plans. Seminoles defensive coordinator Charles Kelly calls James an "eraser" who can wipe out potential big offensive plays.

James, a redshirt sophomore after missing most of last season, is the kind of hybrid athlete that is all the rage on defense. Think Jabrill Peppers, Michigan, 2016. But better.

Only one consensus All-American defender returns nationally — Minkah Fitzpatrick, Alabama's big-play defensive back. The difference is that FSU's James is the ultimate Swiss Army knife, and he's more than ready to continue what he started in 2015.

James spent 2016 as a coach and cheerleader after suffering a meniscus tear in his left knee in Week 2. He could only watch as FSU struggled, first in a blowout at Louisville and then in close home losses to North Carolina and Clemson. The Seminoles rebounded to finish 10-3 with a bowl win over Michigan, leaving the preseason playoff contenders wondering what could have been if James had been healthy.

Louisville's Lamar Jackson and friends put up 63 points, but FSU's other two defeats were tight — 37-35 to UNC and 37-34 to Clemson. Would James have made a difference against elite quarterbacks like the Tar Heels' Mitch Trubisky and the Tigers' Deshaun Watson?

"I wasn't really watching it as if, 'Would it be different?'" James said. "But, of course, there are plays in the game where I feel like I could make it and I could help my team."

He can help in so many ways.

In 2015 as a freshman, James would rush off the edge one play, sit in the box as a pseudo-linebacker the next, perhaps drop back as a deep safety on the following snap. James had 91 tackles that season, despite starting just eight of FSU's 13 games.

James learned pass-rush techniques from Seminoles' defensive ends coach Brad Lawing, sprinting past offensive tackles to record 4.5 sacks and 15 quarterback hurries in 2015. He forced two fumbles and broke up five passes.

And James is a menace in the open field, an instinctual talent who can see the play as it develops and deliver crushing hits.

What can't he do?

When FSU star running back Dalvin Cook was asked last year about the most impressive thing he had seen James do, he succinctly answered: "Windmill."

It's true. James tweeted a video of

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

himself in April, catching a bouncing basketball and taking it between his legs before delivering a left-handed windmill dunk. With ease.

The football instincts and freakish athleticism make NFL teams salivate over James, who is eligible for the 2018 draft.

"He does project as a potential early first-rounder based on what he has shown up to this point," said draft analyst Dane Brugler of CBSSports.com and NFLDraftScout.com. "He has the potential to be an NFL star."

But first up is the 2017 season.

James' return is one of the reasons FSU could end Clemson's recent stronghold on the ACC and get back to the College Football Playoff.

"It's going to be a very exciting year," James said. "We're going to be a team to be reckoned with."

The Seminoles' defense clearly missed James, who had injuries before, but nothing quite as significant. His knee wasn't 100 percent until early January.

He was reminded how much he loved and missed football.

"Don't take nothing for granted," James said. "It's a gift. I learned a lot just by watching it. I take everything more serious."

While he couldn't play, James turned his focus to other areas: the classroom, rehab, film study, teaching the younger defensive backs.

"He grew even more as a student-athlete," said his father, Derwin James Sr. "It molded him more into an outstanding leader. He got the opportunity to see the coaches' perspective while being injured. (And) paying more attention to detail of what's going on in film study."

Make no mistake: the younger James is focused. This could be his last year in Tallahassee, and he has set his goals high for what FSU will accomplish this fall.

"First thing he said was he wanted to win the ACC championship and then the national championship," Derwin James Sr. said. "That's what he's striving for. He said if they don't win the national championship this year, it won't be a successful season."

DEFENSE

Harold Landry

Tyquan Lewis

Ed Oliver

Christian Wilkins

Travin Howard

Josey Jewell

FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Harold Landry	6-3	250	Sr.	Boston College
DL	Tyquan Lewis	6-4	265	Sr.	Ohio State
DL	Ed Oliver	6-2	290	So.	Houston
DL	Christian Wilkins	6-4	310	Jr.	Clemson
LB	Travin Howard	6-1	213	Sr.	TCU
LB	Josey Jewell	6-2	236	Sr.	Iowa
LB	Arden Key	6-6	238	Jr.	LSU
DB	Jaire Alexander	5-11	192	Jr.	Louisville
DB	Minkah Fitzpatrick	6-1	201	Jr.	Alabama
DB	Derwin James	6-3	211	So.	Florida State
DB	Tarvarus McFadden	6-2	198	Jr.	Florida State
P	Mitch Wishnowsky	6-2	220	Jr.	Utah

SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Maurice Hurst	6-2	282	Sr.	Michigan
DL	Da'Ron Payne	6-2	319	Jr.	Alabama
DL	Derrick Nnadi	6-1	312	Sr.	Florida State
DL	Bradley Chubb	6-4	275	Sr.	NC State
LB	Micah Kiser	6-2	240	Sr.	Virginia
LB	Tegray Scales	6-0	230	Sr.	Indiana
LB	Ogbonnia Okoronkwo	6-1	242	Sr.	Oklahoma
DB	Jordan Thomas	6-0	186	Sr.	Oklahoma
DB	Quin Blanding	6-2	215	Sr.	Virginia
DB	Godwin Igwebuike	6-0	205	Sr.	Northwestern
DB	D.J. Reed	5-9	188	Jr.	Kansas State
P	Michael Dickson	6-3	205	Jr.	Texas

Arden Key

Jaire Alexander

Minkah Fitzpatrick

Derwin James

Tarvarus McFadden

Mitch Wishnowsky

PLAYER RATINGS

QUARTERBACKS

Louisville QB Jackson Won't Rest on Heisman Laurels

LAMAR JACKSON

Photo by Joe Robbins

The 2016 season was great for Lamar Jackson and pretty darn good for Louisville.

But the awards ceremonies, the press conferences and the photo shoots are over. The heightened attention has faded, at least for a few months.

How Jackson, a dynamic dual-threat quarterback, uses the time out of the spotlight to get better could make or break his campaign to become only the second repeat winner of the Heisman Trophy behind Archie Griffin of Ohio State.

"I think it's been a grind on Lamar," Louisville coach Bobby Petrino said. "There's a lot of stuff out there he's had to do. It's good he got it over with and got back with his teammates and worked."

How much can a quarterback who accounted for 51 touchdowns and 5,114 total yards improve? To both Jackson and Petrino, the quickest answer is a lot, including cutting down on sacks.

Jackson was electric last season, a fresh-faced sensation who upended college football, his Saturday exploits in constant rotation on ESPN's Top 10 plays.

In the process, Louisville blasted perennial ACC powerhouse Florida State, pushing the Cardinals into the national spotlight in an entirely new way. They stayed in the discussion for the College Football Playoff well into November, and their victory over the Seminoles broke the barrier between Clemson and FSU and the rest of the league.

Then it all came tumbling down.

Houston pummeled Louisville on national television, ending the Cards' hopes of crashing the playoff. Jackson was just 20 of 43 passing, taking 11 sacks and losing a fumble.

Nine days later, Louisville lost the Governor's Cup to archrival Kentucky — a game it needs to win each season — despite Jackson's scintillating play at times. He tallied 452 total yards and four touchdowns, but he threw three interceptions and lost a fumble with 1:45 left in a tie game. The turnover came at Kentucky's 10-yard line, which only made it more painful.

Instead of a late-season Heisman moment for Jackson, it was a crippling error.

And to cap the slide, Jackson (and Louisville) labored through a 29-9 Citrus Bowl rout at the hands of LSU. Jackson took eight sacks and totaled just 186 yards. He lost a fumble on Louisville's final possession of the season.

That Jackson still won the Heisman by an overwhelming margin — and took home the Walter Camp and Maxwell awards, and was a unanimous first-team All-American — speaks volumes for how well he played through the first nine games of the season.

But the final three losses gave him plenty of offseason homework.

"A lot of times we shouldn't have sacks," Jackson said after Louisville's spring game. "I tried to do extra instead of doing the right play and throwing the ball away."

Petrino wants his star pupil to make small tweaks in multiple areas of his game to progress as a passer and game-manager. The list includes working under center more; improving his progression reads; setting his feet and standing tall in the pocket; learning when to throw the ball away.

That checklist will not only help Jackson in his encore campaign, it will help him get ready for the next level.

"I do believe that part of our job is to prepare our players for the possibility of an NFL career," Petrino said. "Some of those things ... we might not do in the fall, but it might help him when he goes to a camp and starts his NFL career."

For the first time in his life, the 6-3 Jackson surpassed 200 pounds on the weight scale. His goal is 210 by preseason practice.

He still runs like the wind, but he'll look a little different, stronger, this fall. And with his laundry list of tweaks, he hopes to make better throws this season.

The Heisman season was great. But that was so 2016.

"I don't remember what happened last year," Jackson said. "I'm trying to focus on this year."

— Jeff Greer is the Louisville beat writer for *The Courier-Journal*. Follow him on Twitter @JeffGreer_CJ.

TOP QUARTERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Sam Darnold**	So.	**USC**
	We believe what we just saw: 453 passing yards, 5 TDs in Rose Bowl win.		
2.	**Lamar Jackson**	Jr.	**Louisville**
	Mr. Heisman's spring testing included a 4.34 40-yard dash. Is that good?		
3.	**Baker Mayfield**	Sr.	**Oklahoma**
	These are not fake numbers: 76 passing TDs, just 15 INTs in past 2 years.		
4.	**J.T. Barrett**	Sr.	**Ohio State**
	His freshman year was so off-the-charts, it's easy to forget he's still great.		
5.	**Mason Rudolph**	Sr.	**Oklahoma State**
	Cowboys launched Heisman campaign for QB who best fits "gunslinger."		
6.	**Trace McSorley**	Jr.	**Penn State**
	Can-do QB came out of nowhere in '16 with 3,614 passing yards, 29 TDs.		
7.	**Quinton Flowers**	Sr.	**South Florida**
	If you were surprised by his 4,342 total yards last year, don't be again.		
8.	**Jake Browning**	Jr.	**Washington**
	Shoulder just fine now; injury diminished efficiency in late-season losses.		
9.	**Luke Falk**	Sr.	**Washington State**
	Air Raid king has thrown for 9,034 yards, just in the past two seasons.		
10.	**Jalen Hurts**	So.	**Alabama**
	Motivation: Background photo on his phone is of Clemson celebrating.		
11.	**Josh Rosen**	Jr.	**UCLA**
	Missed final 6 games (shoulder) but "Rosen One" zinging it again in spring.		
12.	**Josh Allen**	Jr.	**Wyoming**
	Great size, big arm, pro-style system. NFL scouts already swooning.		
13.	**Deondre Francois**	So.	**Florida State**
	The 3,350 passing yards as a freshman was just a whisper of his potential.		
14.	**Nick Fitzgerald**	Jr.	**Mississippi State**
	Dak's replacement awfully fun to watch, ran for 1,375 yards in 2016.		
15.	**Austin Allen**	Sr.	**Arkansas**
	Threw for more than 300 yards against four SEC teams in '16; 400 vs. 'Bama.		
16.	**Jarrett Stidham**	So.	**Auburn**
	Glimpses — 2015 at Baylor, 2017 spring at Auburn — make us believers.		
17.	**Brett Rypien**	Jr.	**Boise State**
	Two-time first-team All-Mountain West looking for first league title.		
18.	**Logan Woodside**	Sr.	**Toledo**
	The returning first-team All-MAC QB threw for 4,089 yards last season.		
19.	**Mike White**	Sr.	**Western Kentucky**
	USF transfer replaced departed Brandon Doughty, passed for 4,289 yards.		
20.	**Clayton Thorson**	Jr.	**Northwestern**
	Third-year starter is the improving, savvy leader sneaky-good Cats need.		
21.	**Wilton Speight**	Sr.	**Michigan**
	Big man showed nice control of O in '16; who is he throwing to in '17?		
22.	**Brent Stockstill**	Sr.	**Middle Tennessee**
	He and WR Richie James are going to light up Conference USA again.		
23.	**Jacob Eason**	So.	**Georgia**
	True freshman season was uneven, but did you see all that potential?		
24.	**Tanner Mangum**	Jr.	**BYU**
	Back in saddle full time in 2017, looking to build on 3,377-yard 2015.		
25.	**Jesse Ertz**	Sr.	**Kansas State**
	Giving him nod over other Big 12 QBs. Million bonus points for toughness.		

PLAYER RATINGS

RUNNING BACKS

Driven Barkley Eyes Penn State Rushing Mark, History

Photo by John Pyle

SAQUON BARKLEY

Less than 24 hours after his brilliant performance in the Rose Bowl, Saquon Barkley was restless on Penn State's flight from California to Pennsylvania.

He kept thinking about what he could have done to help the Nittany Lions avoid a 52-49 loss to USC, even though he gained 306 all-purpose yards and scored three touchdowns, including a spectacular 79-yard run.

"He came up to me midway through the flight," Penn State running backs coach Charles Huff said. "I was sleeping and he tapped me on the shoulder. 'What do I need to get better? What do I need to do this offseason?'"

That's the essence of Barkley, who wasn't satisfied after rushing for 1,496 yards and 18 touchdowns, being named the Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year and leading the Lions to the Big Ten championship last season.

"He's probably the farthest thing from a prima donna," Huff said. "That's probably why he's had so much success. Because of how humble Saquon is and what kind of person he is, the other running backs in our room are envious of his production, but they don't dislike him.

"He's never the one to say, 'I'm better than you.'"

Barkley already has earned a place in the program's history, but he wants to join former Lions like Larry Johnson, Ki-Jana Carter, Blair Thomas, Curt Warner and John Cappelletti as a first-team All-America running back. That's a distinct possibility with Penn State having so much talent back on offense.

"I would like to leave this place as one of the best, if not the best, running backs and one of the best players to ever play here," Barkley said.

Needing 1,361 yards to pass Evan Royster and become Penn State's career leading rusher, Barkley has increased his strength and lowered his time in the 40-yard dash to 4.33 since last season.

He's also worked to improve his pass blocking, a weakness as a freshman, and his route running, even though he caught 28 passes last year for 402 yards and four touchdowns, including touchdown receptions in the Big Ten title game and the Rose Bowl.

"The thing that impresses me the most about him is his preparation and the things he does when people aren't watching," Lions tight end Mike Gesicki said. "He's definitely an unbelievable athlete and has made some incredible plays. It's kind of what you expect from him."

Against Temple, Barkley was a non-factor until the fourth quarter. With Penn State clinging to a three-point lead, he faked out two defenders before finishing a game-clinching 55-yard touchdown run.

Against Minnesota, he had minus-12 yards in the second half before making a dazzling 25-yard touchdown run on Penn State's first play in overtime, lifting the Lions over the Gophers.

Then in the Rose Bowl, against USC, Barkley broke six tackles on his memorable 79-yard touchdown run on Penn State's first snap of the third quarter.

"I've seen a lot of great 2-yard runs," Huff said. "But for that environment and that distance and on that stage, I would say, yes, it's the best one I've seen in person."

In two seasons at Penn State, Barkley has rushed for 2,572 yards and scored 30 touchdowns. If he chooses to forego his senior year and enter the 2018 NFL Draft, this season will be his final bid to become the Lions' first Heisman Trophy winner since Cappelletti in 1973.

"The Heisman Trophy has to cross your mind because it's the Heisman Trophy," Barkley said. "If I ever was fortunate enough to win an award like that, it would be an unbelievable accomplishment. I would be so thankful for it.

"But if you're focused too much on the Heisman, then you're too invested in yourself. You have to come to practice with the mindset of working to win a national championship or a Big Ten championship. You have to be focused on the team."

— Rich Scarcella

TOP RUNNING BACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Saquon Barkley**	Jr.	Penn State
	A GIF in human form, he ping-ponged for 1,496 yards and 18 TDs in 2016.		
2.	**Derrius Guice**	Jr.	LSU
	Life after Fournette won't be rough if Guice keeps breaking off big runs.		
3.	**Ronald Jones II**	Jr.	USC
	Ran for 2,069 yards in two years of shared carries, now he's the man.		
4.	**Kamryn Pettway**	Jr.	Auburn
	His 1,224 rushing yards were fifth in SEC despite missing three games.		
5.	**Nick Chubb**	Sr.	Georgia
	Healthy again; Chubb's swan song could be huge...if he gets the touches.		
6.	**Royce Freeman**	Sr.	Oregon
	New coach Willie Taggart to lean on FBS active rushing leader (4,148).		
7.	**Justin Jackson**	Sr.	Northwestern
	Ultimate workhorse with 855 carries for 4,129 yards and 30 TDs in career.		
8.	**Bo Scarbrough**	Jr.	Alabama
	Most imposing of 'Bama's many blue-chip rushers; will he get more carries?		
9.	**Rawleigh Williams III**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Hogs were 6-0 when he ran for 120-plus yards, 1-6 when he didn't.		
10.	**Myles Gaskin**	Jr.	Washington
	Consecutive 1,300-yard years; another makes him UW career leader.		
11.	**LJ Scott**	Jr.	Michigan State
	Set for big year after strong '16 finish, topping 100 yards in four of last five.		
12.	**Justice Hill**	So.	Oklahoma State
	Set OSU frosh rushing mark (1,142) previously held by Thurman Thomas.		
13.	**Ralph Webb**	Sr.	Vanderbilt
	Set Vandy single-season (1,283) and career (3,342) records last season.		
14.	**Akrum Wadley**	Sr.	Iowa
	Gained 1,081 yards in '16 while splitting carries; now he's the main man.		
15.	**Mark Walton**	Jr.	Miami
	With Joseph Yearby leaving early, Walton will carry 'Canes' rushing load.		
16.	**Josh Adams**	Jr.	Notre Dame
	With enough touches he should be most productive RB of Brian Kelly era.		
17.	**Kyle Hicks**	Sr.	TCU
	Frogs' best rusher since Tomlinson takes pressure off QB Kenny Hill.		
18.	**Justin Crawford**	Sr.	West Virginia
	331 yards vs. Oklahoma and 209 vs. Baylor were signs of things to come.		
19.	**Phillip Lindsay**	Sr.	Colorado
	Not many RBs score 14 red zone TDs and catch 50+ passes in a season.		
20.	**Mike Weber**	So.	Ohio State
	Still scratching surface; he had 15-plus carries once in last eight games.		
21.	**Rodney Smith**	Jr.	Minnesota
	More prolific half of tandem with Shannon Brooks; had 17 total TDs in '16.		
22.	**Jarvion Franklin**	Sr.	Western Michigan
	One more go-round for RB with 3,586 yards and 41 career TDs.		
23.	**Ito Smith**	Sr.	Southern Miss
	Has 3,000-plus rushing yards and 1,000-plus receiving yards in career.		
24.	**Trayveon Williams**	So.	Texas A&M
	His 1,057 rushing yards were most by Aggie frosh since Johnny Manziel.		
25.	**Bennie Snell**	So.	Kentucky
	1,091 yards, 13 TDs made for great debut; what will he do for an encore?		
	*Not ranked: All the great backup RBs in the SEC.		

PLAYER RATINGS

RECEIVERS

Playmaking Kirk Willing to Take on 'Captain' Role at A&M

CHRISTIAN KIRK

Photo by Ken Murray/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

Christian Kirk has made his living at Texas A&M getting a step on defensive backs. Since the end of last season, however, the junior receiver has worked on taking a different kind of step.

One using his lips more than his legs.

"This year my main emphasis is becoming the best leader I can be," said Kirk, one of the nation's top receivers and return men. "We lost (quarterback) Trevor Knight, and he was our main leader, now another guy has to step up."

Based on the returning roster, there's really only one guy that can be: Christian Kirk.

"Christian loves playing on Saturdays, and he loves practice," A&M coach Kevin Sumlin said of the former five-star recruit out of Scottsdale, Arizona. "He respects how the game is played, and he plays that way all of the time."

In an ideal A&M receiving world, Kirk would still have a couple of upperclassmen ahead of him. But Ricky Seals-Jones and Speedy Noil bypassed their senior seasons in hopes of catching on in the NFL, leaving Kirk to run the show with a slew of young and talented receivers.

"It's weird; I'm not even going to lie," Kirk said of being the unquestioned leader on offense only two years removed from high school. "It's different, but at the same time I like it. This is a responsibility I always wanted to have."

That responsibility falls primarily to Kirk based on his work ethic and results. He's the first Aggie in history to have two seasons with at least 80 receptions. He caught 80 passes for 1,009 yards in 2015 and 83 for 928 last season, excelling both years alongside upperclassman Josh Reynolds, now in the NFL.

Kirk has earned a reputation as one of the league's toughest receivers. Case in point: Last season at Auburn.

Midway through the third quarter in the Aggies' eventual 29-16 victory, Knight rolled to his right and threw to Kirk along the sideline. The ball hit Kirk's hands, cornerback Javaris Davis leveled him, the ball bounced out and Kirk stayed hunched on the ground for a short time while the Jordan-Hare Stadium crowd roared.

"It woke me up," Kirk recalled with a smile.

"That was the first hard hit I'd had in my college career. You see the ball, then you see the ground. It happens that fast."

But he wasn't complaining about it, wasn't afraid of getting hit again. It's part of the position he plays. He gets that.

"Hits like that are a part of football, and I'm glad it didn't get called for targeting, or anything like that," Kirk said. "It's kind of disappointing to see some of the hits that are called ... (big hits) are what football used to be."

Kirk projects as a relatively high selection in the NFL Draft now that he will be eligible, which is why this figures to be his final season at A&M. He's been a part of successive 8-5 squads, and he pledged it's time for that to change for the better.

"There are plenty of positions that are open right now, and plenty of opportunities to play," Kirk said.

He's right, and a handful of those positions are at receiver, where the Aggies are auditioning freshmen Jhamon Ausbon, Roshauud Paul and Hezekiah Jones for immediate playing time.

"We know we're going to have to have those guys play," said Kirk, whose veteran perspective belies his baby face. "We've got to get a rotation going."

Meanwhile the youngsters will turn to Kirk for answers along the way, and he pledged he's ready, without reminding them he's only two years removed from high school himself.

— Brent Zwerneman

TOP WIDE RECEIVERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**James Washington**	Sr.	**Oklahoma State**
	Big-play impresario averaged 19.4 ypc with six 100-yard games in 2016.		
2.	**Christian Kirk**	Jr.	**Texas A&M**
	Deadly no matter how he gets the ball, every touch could go distance.		
3.	**Calvin Ridley**	Jr.	**Alabama**
	Has better numbers in first two seasons than Tide's all-time greats.		
4.	**Equanimeous St. Brown**	Jr.	**Notre Dame**
	With ability to break off big plays, will be go-to guy for new QB.		
5.	**Dante Pettis**	Sr.	**Washington**
	Had 18 total TDs, including 15 receiving, most of any returning player.		
6.	**Allen Lazard**	Sr.	**Iowa State**
	Six of eight career 100-yard games came in '16, including in final three.		
7.	**Antonio Callaway**	Jr.	**Florida**
	Talent not issue. Only question: Can the Gators get him the dang ball?		
8.	**Ahmmon Richards**	So.	**Miami**
	New QB has to get the ball to this Freshman All-American (19.1 ypc).		
9.	**Courtland Sutton**	Jr.	**SMU**
	He's 6-4, the scouts love him, another 1,200-yard effort is no problem.		
10.	**Deontay Burnett**	Jr.	**USC**
	Set stage for succeeding JuJu Smith-Schuster with monster Rose Bowl.		
11.	**N'Keal Harry**	So.	**Arizona State**
	Started and finished first season with bursts; totally looks the part.		
12.	**Deon Cain**	Jr.	**Clemson**
	It's his time now to step into bigger role with notable departures.		
13.	**Anthony Miller**	Sr.	**Memphis**
	Had one of quietest 95-catch, 1,434-yard, 14 TD seasons in recent memory.		
14.	**Richie James**	Jr.	**Middle Tennessee**
	Consecutive 100-catch campaigns boosted by time in 2016 as wildcat QB.		
15.	**Shay Fields**	Sr.	**Colorado**
	Deep threat in Buffs' balanced offense; TD vs. Utah clinched Pac-12 South.		
16.	**Michael Gallup**	Sr.	**Colorado State**
	Had 702 receiving yards and nine TD in final five games of 2016.		
17.	**J'Mon Moore**	Sr.	**Missouri**
	Led a burgeoning Tigers pass attack in receptions, yards and TD.		
18.	**Deebo Samuel**	Jr.	**South Carolina**
	Cut from same cloth as ex-Gamecock Pharoh Cooper, can score many ways.		
19.	**Simmie Cobbs**	Jr.	**Indiana**
	We see big things after medical redshirt; had 1,000-yard season in 2015.		
20.	**Darren Carrington**	Sr.	**Oregon**
	With 15 career TD catches, he's the wideout to help revive Ducks.		

TOP TIGHT ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Troy Fumagalli**	Sr.	**Wisconsin**
	Hands of a wideout on body of a linebacker, a third-down ball magnet.		
2.	**Mike Gesicki**	Sr.	**Penn State**
	Emerged in '16 as reliable target after cutting teeth as blocking specialist.		
3.	**Alize Mack**	Jr.	**Notre Dame**
	Back from a yearlong academic suspension; could be next great ND TE.		
4.	**Adam Breneman**	Sr.	**Massachusetts**
	70 catches, 808 yards, eight TDs most among returning TEs. Ex-Nittany Lion.		
5.	**Hayden Hurst**	Jr.	**South Carolina**
	Great weapon in middle of field, next step is finding him in the red zone.		

PLAYER RATINGS

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

TOP CENTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Frank Ragnow** Started 26 straight games for the Hogs; hasn't allowed a sack in two years.	Sr.	Arkansas
2.	**Mason Cole** Veteran of 38 consecutive starts has moved around the line.	Sr.	Michigan
3.	**Billy Price** Fifth-year blocker will team with QB J.T. Barrett to anchor the offense.	Sr.	Ohio State
4.	**Will Clapp** All-SEC OL moving to the middle after two seasons starting at guard.	Jr.	LSU
5.	**Scott Quessenberry** Only allowed two sacks in 2016; rest of UCLA line yielded 22.	Sr.	UCLA
6.	**Coleman Shelton** With 34 starts in three seasons he's as important to UW as all that skill.	Sr.	Washington
7.	**Coleman Thomas** A key to the Vols' explosive run game last year, he'll help mentor new QB.	Sr.	Tennessee
8.	**Bradley Bozeman** Latest standout C for Tide; didn't allow sack in 1,015 snaps last season.	Sr.	Alabama

TOP GUARDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Cody O'Connell** Massive interior blocker is like an extra OT who helps keep Luke Falk upright.	Sr.	Washington State
2.	**Quenton Nelson** Getting him back for another year is a huge boost for ND's rebuild.	Sr.	Notre Dame
3.	**Will Hernandez** Helped Aaron Jones run for 1,700-plus; no sacks allowed since Sept. 2015.	Sr.	UTEP
4.	**Beau Benzschawel** Big holes will be there for Badgers rushers on the right side with him on field.	Jr.	Wisconsin
5.	**Sean Welsh** Didn't allow a sack last season and helped block for two 1,000-yard rushers.	Sr.	Iowa
6.	**Brian Allen** Among few offensive bright spots for Sparty in '16, Allen drew only one flag.	Sr.	Michigan State

TOP TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Connor Williams** Could be first OL taken in 2018 after back-to-back All-American seasons.	Jr.	Texas
2.	**Orlando Brown** This 6-8, 360-pounder has amply protected Mayfield's blind side for 2 years.	Jr.	Oklahoma
3.	**Mike McGlinchey** Passed up big money for another year at ND; Irish will reap the benefits.	Sr.	Notre Dame
4.	**Braden Smith** All-SEC pick as a guard moved outside in the spring for standout OL.	Sr.	Auburn
5.	**Mitch Hyatt** No sacks yielded in 1,000-plus snaps last year; key to protecting new QB.	Jr.	Clemson
6.	**Jamarco Jones** He's ready to return OSU line to old form after it allowed 28 sacks in 2016.	Sr.	Ohio State
7.	**Trey Adams** Jake Browning's backside protector has started 24 of 28 games for Huskies.	Jr.	Washington
8.	**Dalton Risner** Tremendous run-blocker on the edge; a perfect fit for K-State's offense.	Jr.	Kansas State
9.	**Martez Ivey** Ex-5-star prospect moves from guard to shore up Gators' pass attack.	Jr.	Florida
10.	**Jonah Williams** Follows in Cam Robinson's big footsteps, moving from RT to LT in 2017.	So.	Alabama

Oklahoma's Brown Motivated by Dad's Memory

ORLANDO BROWN

Photo by John Williamson

It might have seemed easy for Orlando Brown to quickly emerge as one of the Oklahoma Sooners' strongest leaders and most dominant personalities.

That happens when you're 6-8, 340 pounds and play football with an inherent mean streak.

But it wasn't easy.

"It was really hard," Brown said, "for several reasons."

Brown arrived at OU in 2014 bigger than everyone else. The son of former NFL offensive lineman Orlando Brown Sr. also showed up in Norman with his father's legendary savagery on the field.

But it wasn't until he learned to harness those traits with great technique and improved fitness that Brown became an All-American left tackle.

"You know, in the beginning, he relied at times on physical abilities, or just the fact that he was bigger," said Sooners offensive coordinator Lincoln Riley. "At times, he was just not in good enough shape to have great technique. You've got to be in great shape to play with great technique. But over time, that's developed."

Brown was just a three-star prospect out of Suwanee, Ga. He was a long-time commit to Tennessee, but the Vols backed out of their scholarship offer as Signing Day approached amid concerns over Brown's academics.

Brown signed with OU, redoubled his classroom efforts and became an academic qualifier that summer. He redshirted in 2014, and has since started 26 consecutive games at left tackle. He turned down the NFL Draft this year and likely will be projected as a first-round draft pick in 2018.

"He's a great success story, his coming here and going through what he did as a young person, losing his father," said head coach Bob Stoops, whose own father died suddenly while Stoops was just out of college.

"He's a great young man, does everything right, does well in school. And he's worked hard in the out-of-season to build his body. And he's played great for us."

Still, success didn't come naturally.

"Me coming in here to college three months behind everybody else — I came in the middle of camp. That was difficult," Brown said. "Then to basically beat out two seniors, that was even more difficult. Kind of just putting myself in this leadership role was really difficult also."

Brown also had to fight his way out of the dark place he'd been since his father died in 2011, when Orlando was 15.

"I just used it as motivation to go out there and play my hardest, give it all for the people around me, understanding that not everybody is gonna wake up the next day, that breath can be taken away that easily," he said.

"Just dealing with that has allowed me to understand that. It just kind of drives me and gives me the passion I have for the game."

With Samaje Perine, Joe Mixon and Dede Westbrook off to the NFL, the Sooners are replacing more than 4,500 yards from scrimmage and 47 touchdowns this season. But the offensive line returns intact to protect quarterback Baker Mayfield.

As long as Mayfield remains upright, Oklahoma should be able to move the football. And as long as Brown is on the field, nobody's getting a clear path to Mayfield.

Riley and Stoops wouldn't mind if Brown cut back on the personal foul penalties, but that, too, comes from his dad. If young Orlando didn't get a personal foul by burying his defender, his dad would get up and walk out.

"He didn't play that," Brown said. "I had to be physical or he would leave."

Brown thinks about his dad every day — especially during games.

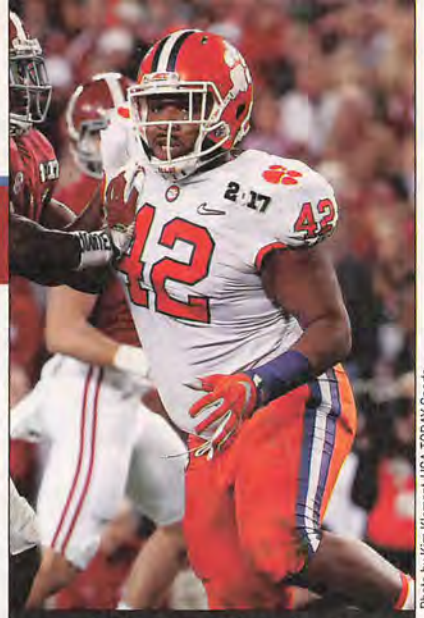
"Oh man, he'd probably still tell me I got a lot of work to do, because he's my dad," Brown said. "But I think he'd be real happy for me, understanding the ultimate goal is getting to the next level and from there making my career as long as possible."

— John E. Hoover

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

Wilkins Thriving at Clemson with Do-It-All Attitude



CHRISTIAN WILKINS

Photo by Kim Klement-USA TODAY Sports

The confetti was still raining down after Clemson's victory in the national title game. Christian Wilkins was celebrating on the field with shirtless dances and by doing the splits, a highly uncommon move for a man of his size.

But there's not much Wilkins can't, or won't, do for the Tigers.

"I'm more than just a football player," said Wilkins, who excels in the classroom. "The things I do are genuine."

The junior defensive lineman can disrupt an offense and wreak havoc in the backfield from the inside or outside. He had 56 tackles, 13 for loss, 3.5 sacks, a fumble recovery and a blocked field goal — all while playing a new position — as an All-American in 2016.

Wilkins has charisma as big as his 6-4, 310-pound frame.

When the offense scores touchdowns, he rushes the field to celebrate.

He crashes coach Dabo Swinney's press conferences.

"He's the biggest personality I've ever been around," new defensive line coach Todd Bates said. "He's just a well-rounded individual. I hate to put a cap on what he can do one day as a person outside of football and in football."

Wilkins doesn't just star on defense.

Along with 340-pound defensive tackle Dexter Lawrence, they clear the way on offense for rushers in a jumbo package. Wilkins became the first Clemson defensive lineman to ever catch a touchdown pass last year, and he's participated in two trick plays on special teams in his career.

Good luck finding a more versatile player — at least one at his size — in college football.

"He's a great player," Swinney said. "It originated in his DNA at birth. He's a gifted guy with a great spirit who loves to play, loves to work, loves to grind. Incredibly confident in what he does."

The former five-star prospect will spearhead one of the best defensive lines in the nation this year. He arrived at Clemson as a prototypical tackle, and he recorded 33 tackles, including 4.5 for loss, off the bench as a freshman in 2015.

It was predetermined that he'd be a starter inside heading into 2016, but when defensive end Austin Bryant suffered a broken foot in August that cost him half the season, Wilkins' versatility moved him to the outside, where he became so effective that he stayed there after Bryant's return.

"It was a pretty smooth transition for us," Swinney said.

It was presumed that Wilkins would move back inside in 2017. Carlos Watkins, who led the team in sacks last season, graduated. Bryant is healthy and ready to live up to his potential at end.

However, Wilkins and the coaches are vague about his usage this fall.

"I'm comfortable doing both. I have a year of experience at each," Wilkins said. "I'm good to go wherever they need me."

It probably depends on which formation and personnel group defensive coordinator Brent Venables chooses to use.

"I didn't play much (tackle) last season, so there's little things I've got to get back used to doing," Wilkins said. "Just the footwork, technique things. Everything happens quicker inside so I've got to be ready for that. I'm ready and willing to do whatever I've got to do to help the team."

Wilkins dropped to 295 pounds by the end of last season, and he wants to find a balance with his weight that will allow him to continue playing either spot.

"He doesn't lose strength when he slims down," Bates said.

Wilkins is already projected to be a first-round pick in the 2018 NFL Draft. His nimble feet, physicality and high football IQ make him a coveted tackle for many pro teams, but he'll be needed for more than just numbers this year.

Clemson lost many leaders off that national-championship squad. Wilkins has the talent and personality to fill that void.

"That's what the team is going to need me to do this year," Wilkins said.

— Brad Senkiw

TOP DEFENSIVE ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tyquan Lewis**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Big Ten Defensive POY in 2016; almost half his solo tackles went for sacks.		
2.	**Harold Landry**	Sr.	Boston College
	Reigning FBS leader in sacks (16.5) gets another year to hound ACC passers.		
3.	**Bradley Chubb**	Sr.	NC State
	His 21.5 TFLs evenly spread through season, with at least one in 10 games.		
4.	**Marquis Haynes**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	Rebels' self-imposed bowl ban means Haynes' dominance ends with Egg Bowl.		
5.	**Clelin Ferrell**	So.	Clemson
	On most teams he'd be THE guy; w/Clemson he's one of many studs up front.		
6.	**Hercules Mata'afa**	Jr.	Washington State
	Not just an awesome name, also a big problem in relatively small package.		
7.	**Sam Hubbard**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Urban Meyer LOVES this kid's character. 'As elite as I've ever been around.'		
8.	**CeCe Jefferson**	So.	Florida
	Top candidate for breakout player; ex-5-star recruit gets his shot to shine.		
9.	**Nick Bosa**	So.	Ohio State
	How to rank all the great OSU DEs? As far as upside, Bosa could be best.		
10.	**Dorance Armstrong**	Jr.	Kansas
	Unanimous All-Big 12. As a soph. At Kansas. That's what 20 TFLs can do.		
11.	**Josh Sweat**	Jr.	Florida State
	DeMarcus Walker's understudy becomes the focal point of FSU's D-line.		
12.	**Duke Ejiofor**	Sr.	Wake Forest
	Second-team All-ACC, ready to building off 2016's 10.5 sacks, 17 TFLs.		

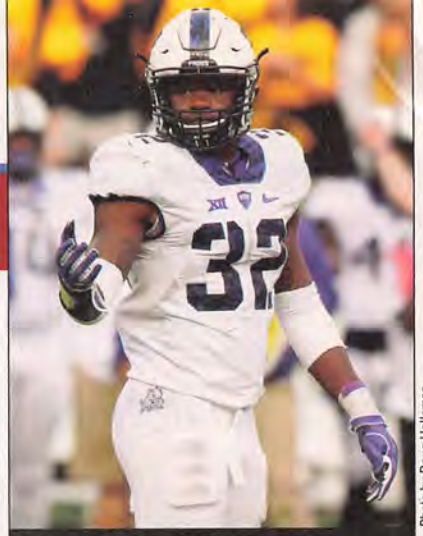
TOP DEFENSIVE TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Christian Wilkins**	Jr.	Clemson
	Speed of edge rusher to go with interior size, power, basically unblockable.		
2.	**Ed Oliver**	So.	Houston
	Coming off possibly best true freshman season ever with five sacks, 22.5 TFL.		
3.	**Maurice Hurst**	Sr.	Michigan
	Tremendous pass rusher from the interior and no slouch against the run.		
4.	**Da'Ron Payne**	Jr.	Alabama
	No need to pity Bama's front-seven losses when studs like this remain.		
5.	**Derrick Nnadi**	Sr.	Florida State
	A huge second half in 2016 should carry over and make FSU stout inside.		
6.	**Dexter Lawrence**	So.	Clemson
	At 6-5, 340 pounds he regularly takes on two blockers with ease.		
7.	**Vita Vea**	Jr.	Washington
	Was second among Huskies in sacks and integral to their strong run D.		
8.	**Trent Thompson**	Jr.	Georgia
	Ex-No. 1 overall recruit came into his own in 2016. but had illness in spring.		
9.	**Lowell Lotulelei**	Sr.	Utah
	Production slumped as a junior, but first-round talent is still there.		
10.	**Rasheem Green**	Jr.	USC
	Ex-5 star is about to hit it big. Last year: 6 sacks, 2 blocked kicks, 2 FFs.		
11.	**Steven Richardson**	Sr.	Minnesota
	Multi-sack games vs. Northwestern and Purdue key to Gophers' 9-4 mark.		
12.	**Greg Gaines**	Jr.	Washington
	Enormous nose tackle whose lateral movement is second to none.		

PLAYER RATINGS

LINEBACKERS

Versatile Howard Redefines Linebacker Spot for TCU



TRAVIN HOWARD

Photo by Doug Holleman

It's not unusual for a player to change positions when he gets to college football. Happens all the time in spring practice.

In Week Two?

Well, that's rare.

But Travin Howard can tell you about it. He did it at TCU two years ago. In less than a week's time, he went from backup safety to starting linebacker because the Horned Frogs lost their two regular linebackers in the blink of an eye.

Thrust into action for a game against Stephen F. Austin, he looked as if he had never played anywhere else. He recorded nine tackles, three behind the line of scrimmage, and stayed in the lineup the rest of the season.

Undersized for the position, and with no experience, Howard wound up the leading tackler for an 11-2 team and winning Gary Patterson's heart.

"It says a lot about him," the Horned Frogs' head coach said that next summer. "He was at 198 pounds and played on the inside."

Howard finished with 105 tackles, plus an interception and three forced fumbles.

A season later, despite a slow start because of an emergency appendectomy on the first day of fall practice, he led the Big 12 in tackles. He became the first TCU linebacker to post back-to-back 100-tackle seasons since 2003-04.

Now the former safety goes into the 2017 season as one of the best players in the Big 12, a senior poised for nationwide notoriety if the Horned Frogs put together a championship push ... or at least some kind of a bounce-back from a 6-7 season.

Howard already has a resume worth talking about.

As a sophomore, he was the Alamo Bowl defensive MVP with 13 tackles and a sack in that wild 31-point comeback victory over Oregon. That followed a 19-tackle performance in the regular-season finale against Baylor, in which he also forced a fumble.

As a junior, he earned first-team All-Big 12 honors from the conference and The Associated Press with a 130-tackle season, ninth most in the country — and the third-most for a player under Patterson at TCU. He matched his career high with 19 tackles against Texas Tech.

Not bad for an emergency starter, who got his chance only because one linebacker (Sammy Douglas) got hurt in the 2015 season opener at Minnesota and another linebacker (Mike Freeze) left the team for personal reasons the following Monday.

"I was a backup strong safety looking to get on the field anywhere I could," Howard said. "And that's what happened."

He still gets snaps at safety, because Patterson likes to take advantage of the veteran's versatility and intelligence. Maybe NFL scouts aren't drooling all over this guy like some of the others on *Lindy's* All-America checklist for linebackers. But Howard excels as a modern, ultra-productive college linebacker, able to line up in various spots against spread offenses that dot the landscape, especially in the Big 12.

"Coach P has trust in me," Howard said. "He depends on me to go out there and do my job."

Remarkably, Howard put together his strong 2016 despite little practice before the first game. He was going through drills on the first day of fall camp in August and just didn't feel right. Teammates noticed discomfort on his face. Before anyone realized, he had left practice.

It was only when they were walking off the field that they learned Howard had been taken to the hospital.

"I knew something was wrong," Howard said, recalling the appendectomy incident during interviews for the Liberty Bowl in December. "I was still practicing, thinking it was something minor. It turned out to be a bigger deal than I thought it was."

The same can be said about him. Thanks to a position change, Howard turned out to be a bigger deal than he was.

"I found a place to be on the field," he said. "And it happened to be at linebacker."

— Carlos Mendez

TOP INSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Josey Jewell**	Sr.	Iowa
	Only returning Butkus Award finalist has consecutive 120-tackle seasons.		
2.	**Micah Kiser**	Sr.	Virginia
	Third-leading tackler in FBS in 2016; has 251 takedowns last two years.		
3.	**Tegray Scales**	Sr.	Indiana
	Led nation in tackles for loss with 23.5 en route to 126 total tackles.		
4.	**Azeem Victor**	Sr.	Washington
	Hoping to rebound after leg injury sidelined him in mid-November.		
5.	**Cameron Smith**	Jr.	USC
	A ball hawk who regularly leads the Trojans in tackles; great run-stuffer.		
6.	**Nyles Morgan**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	A bright spot from shoddy 2016 defense, learned from Jaylon Smith.		
7.	**Roquan Smith**	Jr.	Georgia
	Best of the Bulldogs' rising crop of tacklers, should build off strong 2016.		
8.	**Shaun Dion Hamilton**	Sr.	Alabama
	Would be ranked higher but might be slowed early after knee injury.		
9.	**Jack Cichy**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	Was on a tear before getting hurt midway through last season.		
10.	**Rashaan Evans**	Sr.	Alabama
	Ready for his close-up as Alabama's LB lineup never pauses to reload.		
11.	**Shaquille Quarterman**	So.	Miami
	Superb freshman campaign (84 tackles, 10 for loss) is just the beginning.		
12.	**T.J. Edwards**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	An all-purpose defender with three picks and 8.5 TFLs last season.		

TOP OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Arden Key**	Jr.	LSU
	A sack master who combines the power of a down lineman with speed of LB.		
2.	**Travin Howard**	Sr.	TCU
	130 tackles came via eight games with 10-plus takedowns, four 10-solo games.		
3.	**Ogbonnia Okoronkwo**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Among most flexible edge rushers around; coverage skills stand out, too.		
4.	**Skai Moore**	Sr.	South Carolina
	Missed 2016 with herniated disc; led Gamecocks in tackles from 2013-15.		
5.	**Malik Jefferson**	Jr.	Texas
	Ex-coach Charlie Strong's prized recruit is now Tom Herman's field general.		
6.	**Jordan Jones**	Jr.	Kentucky
	His 15.5 tackles for loss last year most among returning SEC defenders.		
7.	**Jerome Baker**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Rising star has the athleticism that will remind many of LB Darron Lee.		
8.	**Tremaine Edmunds**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	Long and lean but stronger than most, Edmunds is a skilled disruptor.		
9.	**Porter Gustin**	Jr.	USC
	Helped USC get feisty up front last season with team-best 13 TFLs.		
10.	**Troy Dye**	So.	Oregon
	Strong prospect for Ducks to build around; made 13 TFLs and six sacks.		
11.	**Lorenzo Carter**	Sr.	Georgia
	Our guess: NFL pass-rush prospect puts it all together in senior season.		
12.	**Ty Summers**	Jr.	TCU
	One of hardest hitters in the game, should be off edge more this year.		

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE BACKS

Mr. Versatile: Fitzpatrick Gives Tide Options at DB

Minkah Fitzpatrick hopes to play cornerback at the next level, but the Alabama All-American has moved back to safety to let coach Nick Saban put his best set of defensive backs on the field together.

And, with Fitzpatrick's multiple skills, Saban can experiment all he wants.

"Minkah pretty much can do everything in my eyes," said Crimson Tide senior cornerback Anthony Averett. "Wherever you want to put him, he can play."

TOP CORNERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tarvarus McFadden**	Jr.	Florida State
	Shared the national lead with eight INTs in 2016; don't throw at him.		
2.	**Jaire Alexander**	Jr.	Louisville
	Stellar at one-on-one coverage he's also a rising star in the return game.		
3.	**Jordan Thomas**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	OU's pass D struggled, but talented Thomas was active with 17 PBUs.		
4.	**D.J. Reed**	Jr.	Kansas State
	Three picks, 16 PBUs and a strong kick return average for all-league CB.		
5.	**Duke Dawson**	Sr.	Florida
	Moving from nickel to corner to fill very big CB shoes at Florida.		
6.	**Iman Marshall**	Jr.	USC
	Losing Adoree' Jackson hurts secondary, but Marshall softens the blow.		
7.	**Quenton Meeks**	Jr.	Stanford
	His 50-yard pick-six paced a comeback win at Notre Dame.		
8.	**Donte Jackson**	Jr.	LSU
	Dynamic athlete — shocking for an LSU DB, right? — might dabble on O.		
9.	**Greg Stroman**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
	His teammate Brandon Facyson might fit here, too. Take your pick.		
10.	**Rashard Fant**	Sr.	Indiana
	5-10 Fant swats away passes like he's 6-5; 39 PBUs in past two seasons.		
11.	**Denzel Ward**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Good enough in '16 to be in 3-way time share with two first-round picks.		
12.	**Andre Chachere**	Sr.	San Jose State
	4 picks, 14 PBUs, 2 FFs, first-team All-Mountain West, NFL prospect.		

TOP SAFETIES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Derwin James**	Jr.	Florida State
	Has all the tools in his toolbox; won't be so easy passing vs. FSU in 2017.		
2.	**Minkah Fitzpatrick**	Jr.	Alabama
	Slides over from corner where he had six INTs and two TDs last season.		
3.	**Quin Blanding**	Sr.	Virginia
	His 358 career tackles are most among active FBS players; had 118 in 2016.		
4.	**Godwin Igwebuike**	Sr.	Northwestern
	Had 78 solo tackles last season, fifth-most in country.		
5.	**Dominick Sanders**	Sr.	Georgia
	Battled injuries most of 2016, still had three picks and a fumble return.		
6.	**Jordan Whitehead**	Jr.	Pitt
	Moving from boundary to field safety puts him in line for more impact.		
7.	**Armani Watts**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Has six interceptions and 14 tackles for loss during his career.		
8.	**Marcus Allen**	Sr.	Penn State
	Big Ten's third-leading tackler from 2016 is an expert run stuffer.		
9.	**Ronnie Harrison**	Jr.	Alabama
	Latest in a long line of hard-hitting Crimson Tide safeties.		
10.	**Chase Hansen**	Jr.	Utah
	Love his fearlessness; led the Utes in tackles last season with 90.		
11.	**Tre Flowers**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Rangy free safety earned second-team All-Big 12 honors last season.		
12.	**Taylor Rapp**	So.	Washington
	Defensive Freshman of the Year is the new star in UW's secondary.		

Photo by RD Moore

MINKAH FITZPATRICK

That was true last season when Fitzpatrick played the first eight games of his sophomore year at cornerback and the final seven at safety after starting safety Eddie Jackson suffered a fractured leg against Texas A&M in late October.

Fitzpatrick didn't miss a beat at safety, helping lead Alabama to the SEC Championship Game and the College Football Playoff.

He made six interceptions and broke up seven passes. He returned two of the picks for touchdowns, bringing his career total to four, which is already a Crimson Tide record. His 186 interception return yards nearly led the nation.

As a freshman, Fitzpatrick played the "star" position, which is Alabama's name for its nickel back.

"It's very difficult for any player to be able to play two positions at one time," Saban said. "The cross-training we want to do is we want to create goals for guys in different circumstances. But once a guy learns one thing, then to have the flexibility to teach him something else.

"Minkah's a good example. He knew how to play nothing but star when he was a freshman, then he learned how to play corner, then he learned how to play safety, and now he can play just about anywhere.

"But he never learned all those things at once. He sort of mastered one thing and did the next."

One of the bonuses of playing so many positions: Fitzpatrick had to become more of a team leader and know every aspect of the defense. This spring, Fitzpatrick acted and talked like the leader of the defensive backs.

He sounded like Saban when asked about a potential dip in production after Alabama had the stingiest defense in the nation last season.

"Overall as a team, we've got a lot of improvement to do," Fitzpatrick said, "but I don't think anybody has a complete team right now or close to a complete team right now."

It's worth noting that Fitzpatrick didn't complain about the move to safety, even though it might mean fewer opportunities for those highlight-making interceptions. The safeties are more involved in run support.

"At corner, it's more like being on your own," he said.

"You don't have to worry about anybody else, you don't have to make any calls. But at safety you almost have to run the defense. You have to make calls, talk to the linebackers, the defensive line and talk to the corners and the star.

"You have to be more verbal and more of a leader out there. I did a little bit at star, but did a whole lot more at safety."

For all the great defensive backs Saban has coached at Alabama — including five first-round picks — none has won the Jim Thorpe Award, given to the nation's best at the position. In fact, the last Crimson Tide player to be so honored was Antonio Langham in 1993.

Fitzpatrick in 2017?

He's a favorite to win it, no matter where he lines up in the secondary.

Wide receiver teammate Calvin Ridley was asked this spring if Fitzpatrick was tougher to face as a cornerback or safety. Ridley simply answered, "I think Minkah, just period."

— Christopher Walsh

PLAYER RATINGS

ALL PURPOSE

Here's a Reason to Watch Rutgers: Grant is Great

Of Janarion Grant's 83 career receptions, one ended in the end zone. So why is Rutgers gaga over getting back what it calls its game-changer?

How about the fact that Grant has eight career special-teams touchdowns, tying him for the most in FBS history? He averages 9.3 yards per rush and is a threat to break a big play on any touch.

JANARION GRANT

Photo by Dave Sizer

As it turns out, Grant's broken ankle against Iowa in the fourth game of the 2016 season — which left Rutgers in a tailspin — could be the Scarlet Knights' biggest break in 2017. That's because one of the nation's most fun-to-watch players is back for a fifth year after being granted a medical redshirt by the Big Ten.

"He did it on special teams when he was healthy and he did it on offense when he was healthy," Rutgers second-year coach Chris Ash said. "We are hoping we can get him bigger and stronger, and stay healthy and he can do that for us this next year. It just lifts the play of everybody else around him."

Rutgers, which went 2-10 in 2016, is starved for playmakers. And the 5-10, 172-pound Grant, a receiver by trade, is a dynamic one.

Consider the play in which he went down against Iowa. Grant caught a swing pass to the left, made a guy miss at the line of scrimmage, cut inside past another defender, sprinted down field, ducked out of a would-be tackle and then cut back to the sideline inside the 5, where he was brought down by defensive back Desmond King for a 76-yard gain.

King just happened to step on Grant's right ankle while making the stop. Season over.

Amazingly, Grant's three rushing touchdowns in 2016 still led the team, and he finished fourth in catches (20) and third in receiving yards (210).

"There's no question we need a guy like that," said first-year offensive coordinator Jerry Kill, a longtime head coach who was last at Minnesota. "We need playmakers. We need those types of guys."

Grant has tremendous stop-start ability and gets to top speed in a few steps. He is elusive in the open field, yet patient with the ball in his hands, and knows how to make the big play.

His first touch as a freshman resulted in a kickoff return for a touchdown; he has taken four other kicks back for scores. Grant also has three punt-return touchdowns. His 2,606 kickoff return yards are a school record.

He is a special teams marvel who averages more yards per punt return (11.4) than per reception (10.8). Now, Grant wants to transfer his special-teams magic into offensive production.

Kill is looking forward to using Grant any and every which way. Grant is looking at his fifth offensive coordinator in five years, but he knows this one is different. Kill has a seasoned offensive mind with a lot of experience and ideas.

Knowing what Kill is planning offensively helped Grant decide on coming back to Rutgers.

"We were going through so many changes through the years. It really wasn't stable," Grant said. "I'm like, 'OK, we've got a new coach coming in. I'm going to see what he's like.' I've been hearing he was a head coach for like 24 years.

"He has a lot of experience under his belt. I'm pretty sure he's dealt with a lot of players through his lifetime."

Grant was limited in the spring but met with Kill about developing more as a receiver and having a major impact on the offense. And he'll still do all those fancy things on special teams.

Rutgers might not be must-see TV, but it's worth tuning in to see what Grant will do next.

— Brian Dohn

TOP KICKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Daniel Carlson**	Sr.	Auburn
	What we love the most: He's 9 of 13 from 50-plus yards in his career.		
2.	**Gary Wunderlich**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	Made 22 of 23 FGAs last season, beat Texas A&M with 39-yarder.		
3.	**Eddy Pineiro**	So.	Florida
	Hit a pair of 54-yard field goals and led FBS in average kickoff yardage.		
4.	**Emmit Carpenter**	Jr.	Minnesota
	Selected Big Ten Kicker of the Year in debut season (22 of 24, long of 53).		
5.	**Tyler Davis**	Sr.	Penn State
	Hit 18 consecutive field goal attempts last season; needs to add distance.		
6.	**Aidan Schneider**	Sr.	Oregon
	Dependable (42 of 48 career FGs), hopes to get more chances in 2017.		
7.	**Greg Huegel**	Jr.	Clemson
	Plenty tested under pressure, hitting 41 of 51 career field goal attempts.		
8.	**John Baron II**	Jr.	San Diego State
	21 of 23 FGs last season, long of 50, in taking first-team MW honors.		

TOP PUNTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Mitch Wishnowsky**	Jr.	Utah
	Ray Guy Award has gone to a Utah punter three years in a row.		
2.	**Michael Dickson**	Jr.	Texas
	Averaged 47.4 yards per punt and was finalist for Ray Guy award.		
3.	**JK Scott**	Sr.	Alabama
	Model of excellence for the past three years, 47.2-yard average last year.		
4.	**Joe Davidson**	Sr.	Bowling Green
	All-MAC punter is 6-7, so we're talking about long levers to smash the ball.		
5.	**Johnny Townsend**	Sr.	Florida
	Eked out the national lead in punting average at 47.9 yards.		
6.	**Michael Carrizosa**	Sr.	San Jose State
	Fourth-year starter was Ray Guy Award finalist in 2015.		
7.	**Trevor Daniel**	Sr.	Tennessee
	Averaged 44.7 yards last season after posting 45.7 mark in 2015.		
8.	**Tom Sheldon**	So.	North Carolina
	Opponents total return yards last year: 2. Better than 40 yards net.		

TOP ALL PURPOSE

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Janarion Grant**	Sr.	Rutgers
	His cutting ability makes him a home-run threat on every touch.		
2.	**Quadree Henderson**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
	WR/RB/RET had 3 kick return TDs, more than 2,000 all-purpose yards.		
3.	**Christian Kirk**	Jr.	Texas A&M
	Doubling-up on Kirk here and on our checklist for wide receivers.		
4.	**Rashaad Penny**	Sr.	San Diego State
	Speedy RB ran for 1,000 yards last season, returned two kicks for TDs.		
5.	**Antonio Callaway**	Jr.	Florida
	Has rushing, receiving, passing, punt return and kickoff return TDs.		
6.	**KaVontae Turpin**	Jr.	TCU
	Back to form after slowed by knee problem; lots of athleticism as WR/RET.		
7.	**Parris Campbell**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Sliding into Curtis Samuel hybrid role; 3rd-team all-league as RS in 2016.		
8.	**Kerryon Johnson**	Jr.	Auburn
	Part of super 1-2 RB punch; led the Tigers last season in all-purpose yards.		

UNIT RANKINGS

TOP 10 BACKFIELD

Here are the rules: We're looking for teams that have a great quarterback AND a great running back, or, in the most blessed of cases, have multiples of all that positional greatness. So that's why you won't see a team with a superstar back and a tepid quarterback (LSU, for example) or a pro prospect QB and a mid-dlin' ground attack. We're looking for the *complete* backfield.

1. PENN STATE

At the beginning of last season, who knew what a McSorley was? The Christian Hackenberg quarterback era in Happy Valley failed to launch, and all the Penn State preseason preaching was still about patience. And then Trace McSorley took over first-year coordinator Joe Moorhead's up-tempo offense, started throwing bombs ... and it just all just clicked RIGHT NOW. Other quarterbacks might look the part more than McSorley, but there's a little something extra in his demeanor that screams winner. Love that. As for running back Saquon Barkley? Everyone knew who he was before last season — although his 1,496 yards and 18 touchdowns were expectation-exceeding totals that filled the spotlight.

2. USC

There is no scheming for these guys, because Sam Darnold can make all the throws, while his nifty feet defeats a full-out pass-rushing assault. And defenses absolutely have to respect the run with Ronald Jones II putting up 2,069 rushing yards and 20 touchdowns in two seasons as a time-share back. The less time he shares, the better the Trojans will be.

3. ALABAMA

Bo Scarbrough. Damien Harris. Josh Jacobs. B.J. Emmons. Najee Harris. Brian Robinson Jr. Alabama has a six-pack of all-star backs in what would be a relentless Tide rushing attack in days of Nick Saban gone by. But Saint Nick also has reigning SEC Offensive Player of the Year Jalen Hurts and at least a willingness to take more shots downfield as his sophomore quarterback matures.

4. OKLAHOMA STATE

Mason Rudolph was eighth nationally in passing yards (4,091) and 10th in the country in passing efficiency (158.9 rating), and it's not like those numbers are going to get worse this season. For opponents, the other backfield worry is the potential of speedster Justice Hill — 206 carries for 1,142 yards as a freshman last season — to get to the edge for more big plays.

5. WASHINGTON

The Huskies enter their third season of the Jake Browning-Myles Gaskin partnership. The net gains: 6,385 yards passing and 59 TDs from Browning; 2,675 rushing yards and 24 scores from Gaskin. And an appearance in the College Football Playoff.

6. OHIO STATE

Somehow, J.T. Barrett is still in college. That, by some, is perceived as a negative and a testimony to unfulfilled expectations, although, somehow, we don't picture Urban Meyer probably weeping into his pillow about having a 22-year-old senior who knows all about big games. While Barrett's career hasn't followed a steady growth pattern, he remains one of the best running quarterbacks in college and he'll be helped by Mike Weber, who averaged 6.0 yards per carry as a freshman.

7. AUBURN

Best-case scenario: Jarrett Stidham is Cam Newton. More realistic scenario: He's one of the top three or four quarterbacks in the SEC. Worst-case scenario: Auburn still has returning starter Sean White. Whatever happens at quarterback, the Tigers can count on physical running back Kamryn Pettway and versatile Kerryon Johnson.

8. GEORGIA

Did not expect to be writing about running back Nick Chubb and Sony Michel in the present tense in the 2017 editions of *Lindy's*, but that's how the stars aligned to second-year coach Kirby Smart's benefit. The thunder-and-lightning senior combination supports talented sophomore QB Jacob Eason (or maybe even true freshman Jake Fromm, depending on how much stock you put in spring ball).

9. OREGON

Here are the reasons why Oregon will bounce back from a 4-8 season that included a last-place finish in the Pac-12 North: QB Justin Herbert looked to be the answer at quarterback late last season as a redshirt freshman, and RB Royce Freeman stiff-armed the NFL to return as a senior. The Ducks have ample legs at running back, too, including Kani Benoit, Tony Brooks-James and Taj Griffin, coming back from a knee injury.

10. FLORIDA STATE

QB Deondre Francois was the ACC Rookie of the Year last season, passing for 3,350 yards, with only seven interceptions in 400 pass attempts. He should only be better as a sophomore. That RB Dalvin Cook, a second-round pick, is no longer around is mitigated by the arrival of true freshman Cam Akers. Have you seen this kid?

Trace McSorley and Saquon Barkley

Photo by Abby Drey/Centre Daily Times via AP

TOP 10 RECEIVERS

1. OKLAHOMA STATE

It's not just what the Cowboys have coming back, it's what they add. James Washington (1,380) is *Lindy's* top-rated receiver, and slot Jalen McCleskey is the leading returning pass-catcher in the Big 12 with 73 receptions. Chris Lacey is solid. The scary thing is that 6-4 Marcell Ateman, a 2015 starter, is back from injury

and in walks transfer Tyron Johnson, a former five-star kid from LSU.

2. COLORADO

Every wideout who caught a pass in the Buffaloes' surprising — nay, shocking — surge to the Pac-12 South title returns. From shifty Shay Fields (nine TDs), to receptions leader Devin Ross, to Jay MacIntyre (the head coach's son) to Bryce Bobo ... this is the deepest group in the Pac-12, by far. Added to the mix: Junior college transfer Juwann Winfree, coming off a redshirt season because of injury, and a host of talented freshmen.

3. CLEMSON

Only a program on a recruiting roll can be this good after losing first-round WR Mike Williams and ultra-productive TE Jordan Leggett. Speedy deep threat Deon Cain takes over as the No. 1 target, Ray-Ray McCloud looked ready for a bigger role in the spring ... and former walk-on Hunter Renfrow has free beverages for life after catching the game-winning TD pass against Alabama. The next great one: Freshman Tee Higgins.

4. NOTRE DAME

The 6-5 Equanimeous St. Brown is a potential All-American (averaging a healthy 16.6 yards per carry last season), while C.J. Sanders and Kevin Stepherson are speedier, defense-stretching options for new QB Brandon Wimbush. Meanwhile, spring was buzzing with talk of tight end Alize Mack, back on the field after missing 2016 because of academics.

5. FLORIDA

Antonio Callaway is a major talent. Brandon Powell and Tyrie Cleveland have explosive capabilities. TE DeAndre Goolsby snagged 38 passes last season. But it's better to trust your eyes with this group, not the numbers, which have been mediocre due to the quarterback play. If freshman Feleipe Franks starts flinging it, this corps will shine.

6. ALABAMA

First-round TE O.J. Howard and WR ArDarius Stewart are gone. So, all Alabama has left is All-American-caliber wideout Calvin Ridley, a healthy (for now) Robert Foster, the 6-5 Cam Sims, early enrolled star-in-waiting Jerry Jeudy ... and a bunch of other kids with lots of recruiting stars in front of their names.

7. USC

This looked like a potential trouble spot, with JuJu Smith-Schuster leaving early for the NFL and Darreus Rogers completing his eligibility. But Deontay Burnett emerged late last season; tight end Daniel Imatorbhebhe is a beast; the Trojans signed five-star Joseph Lewis, and the roster is teeming with potential.

8. INDIANA

It's a year of transition at wide receiver in the Big Ten, and the Hoosiers appear to have the best group. Simmie Cobbs was a 1,000-yard receiver in 2015 but had to redshirt last season due to an ankle injury. Nick Westbrook came up five yards short of a 1,000-yard season in 2016. Most productive duo in the Big Ten.

9. PENN STATE

Looking for a breakout star in the Big Ten? Coaches and teammates just could not stop raving about sophomore Juwan Johnson this spring. He joins guys — DaeSean Hamilton, Saeed Blacknall and DeAndre Thompkins — who have shown big-play flashes. Mike Gesicki set school records last season for receptions (48) and receiving yards (679) for a tight end.

10. MISSOURI

J'Mon Moore is the SEC's only returning 1,000-yard receiver, complemented by Dimetrios Mason and Johnathon Johnson and a pair of returning tight ends who caught five TDs last season. And QB Drew Lock can get them the ball.

TOP 10 OFFENSIVE LINE

1. OKLAHOMA

Why did QB Baker Mayfield come back for his senior year? "The whole front line," he said. It's back. It's all back. All five starters, including 6-8, 360-pound Orlando Brown, last season's Big 12 Offensive Lineman of the Year. The unit protected Mayfield well and led the way for the Sooners to average 236.8 yards per game on the ground. In all, eight linemen who started games last season return, led by Brown, protecting the blind side. "Yeah, it's something I don't take for granted; I know that," said coordinator Lincoln Riley. "I've been places where you don't have a great left tackle, and it changes your whole world."

2. ALABAMA

The big loss was second-round left tackle Cam Robinson, but the corresponding moves involve two five-star recruits. Sophomore Jonah Williams moves from the right side to replace Robinson, while true freshman Alex Leatherwood is a potential starter at right tackle. A pair of all-star-caliber veterans — center Bradley Bozeman and left guard Ross Pierschbacher — show the young 'uns the way.

3. NOTRE DAME

As with most Notre Dame position groups last season, there more was individual talent than cohesive production. The Irish were 85th in sacks allowed, 80th in rushing and are still chagrined over a high number of false start penalties. But with a pair of potential All-Americans in LT Mike McGlinchey and LG Quenton Nelson — plus two other starters back — there is no excuse to not get this right.

4. LSU

Leonard Fournette and Derrius Guice had help last season — and it wasn't from the passing game. The offensive line did its job despite the lack of offensive balance, and three starters return from that group. The best of the bunch, Will Clapp, moves from guard to center this season.

5. WASHINGTON

Until last season, the Huskies hadn't had a first-team all-conference offensive lineman since 2001. Explains a lot, doesn't it? Jake Eldrenkamp and Trey Adams ended the drought, and Adams, a junior left tackle, is back for more for the defending Pac-12 champs. Senior center Coleman Shelton was a second-team pick last season.

6. CLEMSON

We could nitpick the national champs a little bit here and point out that the run game wasn't overwhelmingly dominating last season. OK, now on to the good stuff. Four starters return, notably left tackle Mitch Hyatt and guard Tyrone Crowder, who helped the Tigers get to the title game in each of the past two seasons.

7. OHIO STATE

Billy Price is the veteran guard moving to center — just like Pat Elflein did a year earlier — to fill the most critical spot on the line. Tackle Jamarco Jones is the real deal. Left guard Michael Jordan started as a true freshman. Isaiah Prince is back at a tackle spot. Motivation: These guys failed to control the line in last year's season-altering loss at Penn State.

8. MIAMI

The Hurricanes are back to being a deep unit, mixing seniors such as guard Kc McDermott (21 consecutive starts) and center Nick Linder, with promising freshmen such as guard Navaughn Donaldson, who was mauling defenders this spring.

9. IOWA

The Hawkeyes won the 2016 Joe Moore Award, which goes to the nation's top offensive line ... and that is just so Iowa. If you can't count on the Hawkeyes being tough, physical and fundamentally sound up front, what are we doing here? Four starters are back, including guard Sean Welsh.

10. FLORIDA

Experience and talent, with four returning starters, led by tackles Martez Ivey and Jawaan Taylor. There's a little bit of "look like Tarzan, play like Jane" going on here, though, so the Gators need to step up their game to be worthy of this ranking at the end of the year.

UNIT RANKINGS

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE LINE

1. OHIO STATE

Tyquan Lewis is the reigning Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, and we can't even tell you with any conviction that he's the best defensive end on his team. Or even the second best. This is an obscenely good group with no pecking order, with Lewis, Sam Hubbard, Jalyn Holmes and Nick Bosa basically all on the same elite level. With the two starting defensive tackles back, too, Urban Meyer and staff have done the math and figured that five is better than four — so, one of those ends could turn into a stand-up linebacker on the edge by the time the season rolls around.

2. CLEMSON

Any other year, this is the No. 1 D-line in the land. The Tigers don't have Ohio State's depth — that's not a knock on Clemson but a nod to the Buckeyes — although if you wanted to make the case that this starting four is better, we'd listen. *Lindy's* preseason All-American Christian Wilkins is moving back from end to the inside, where he will team with super-sized sophomore Dexter Lawrence. Clelin Ferrell and Austin Bryant, coming back from injury, hold down the ends. If Clemson makes it back to the playoff, this is why.

3. ALABAMA

The Tide's three-man front features two former five-star recruits and a four-star. That's just the way Nick Saban's assembly line rolls, so when guys like Jonathan Allen leave, there's somebody there to plug the holes and shoot the gaps. A generous rotation guarantees that the next man up is ready.

4. FLORIDA STATE

DeMarcus Walker took his 16 sacks to the NFL, but there is plenty left over for a Seminoles team that finished second in the country with 51. There are 22.5 returning sacks among a trio of linemen — tackle Derrick Nnadi, and ends Brian Burns and Josh Sweat. Now, can somebody corral Lamar Jackson?

5. WASHINGTON

The success of Washington's top 10 scoring defense in 2016 started with being able to control the front without devoting extra personnel, and the Huskies bring back two anchor points from that three-man line — Vita Vea and Greg Gaines. They lost Elijah Qualls early to the NFL Draft but were pleasantly surprised when Vea decided to stay. He's just your average 340-pounder who runs a sub 5-second 40.

6. GEORGIA

This ranking depends on the health of former five-star Trent Thompson, forced to withdraw from school this spring with an illness. The line revolves around his All-America presence, with end Jonathan Ledbetter and nose tackle John Atkins part of a very good supporting cast.

7. UTAH

The Utes will try to beat you up at the line of scrimmage, and that starts with senior tackle Lowell Lotulelei, a run-stuffing, bull-rushing chunk of granite. And then they hit you with an outside rush, and that's end Kylie Fitts, a potential double-digit sack guy.

8. USC

Turning this from a recent weakness into a strength, the Trojans led the Pac-12 by allowing just 128.8 rushing yards per game in conference play. USC loses its best lineman — Stevie Tu'ikolovatu — but junior tackle Rasheem Green is developing into an all-conference force, senior Kenny Bigelow might finally be healthy and five-star freshman tackle Marlon Tuipulotu looked really good in the spring.

9. FLORIDA

The Gators are a bit shorter on star power than usual, although options are plentiful and junior end CeCe Jefferson looks ready to fulfill the promise of his five-star ranking. Meanwhile, new starting tackle Taven Bryan goes by the nickname "Wyoming Wild Man," which can't be a bad thing.

Jalyn Holmes

Photo by Joe Maiorana-USA TODAY Sports

10. AUBURN

An opposing SEC coach told *Lindy's* he thinks the Tigers have "the best defensive line in the country" and that there are "nine NFL players on their D-line." (Auburn lost Carl Lawson and Montravius Adams, by the way). Best in country? Don't know about that ... but there was no way we were leaving the Tigers off our top 10.

TOP 10 LINEBACKERS

1. GEORGIA

There is ample talent on a team that returns 10 starters from a defense that ranked 16th in the country in yards allowed. The next step to greatness is unleashing the full pass-rushing potential of senior outside linebackers Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy; they combined for 10 sacks and 15 tackles for loss last season and, frankly, can do better. Roquan Smith could push for All-America honors from an inside position, joined by Natrez Patrick and Reggie Carter in the rotation. Like with the entire Bulldogs team: It looks good on paper ... now, let's see it.

2. VIRGINIA TECH

Returning starters Tremaine Edmunds and Andrew Motuapuaka combined for 220 tackles, including 24 for loss and 6.5 sacks, with four interceptions, seven other pass break-ups, three fumble recoveries and two forced fumbles. (What, no blocked kicks?) Edmunds, at 6-5, 236, has the rangy athleticism and good bloodlines — his father Ferrell played in the NFL for seven seasons — to be a top prospect at the next level.

3. TCU

Senior linebacker Travin Howard combines activity with accomplishment as the be-everywhere Big 12 tackle leader from a season ago. More veterans at linebacker in the 4-2-5 are Ty Summers and Sammy Douglas, with the depth being such that the Frogs could potentially give one of those players more time off the edge in an upgraded speed package.

4. USC

Junior Cameron Smith could play for anyone, one of the best run-stuffing linebackers in the country. He led the Trojans with 83 stops last season. His rock-solidness gives outside linebackers Porter Gustin (13 tackles for loss, 5.5 sacks last season) and Uchenna Nwosu (7.5 tackles for loss, three sacks) the freedom to be disruptive off the edge.

5. OKLAHOMA

Coordinator Mike Stoops is going back to a 4-3 look, and he has athleticism galore at linebacker as

Tarvarus McFadden

Photo by Aaron M. Sprecher via AP

the best part of his defense. Ogbonnia Okoronkwo is the headliner — 12 tackles for loss, nine sacks and seven quarterback hurries last season — but there's so much depth and five-star talent here, it makes you wonder. Going back to a 4-3?

6. KENTUCKY

The Wildcats got to a bowl last season, although their defense was not great. Don't blame the linebackers (point to the interior linemen, if you must) and the starting group returns intact. Second-team All-SEC Jordan Jones (109 tackles, 15.5 for loss) can play for anyone, a relentless mass of energy, one of those guys who just LOVES football.

7. ALABAMA

Dang. You know, we know, Alabama could be No. 1 on this list by the end of the season — because, well, Alabama — but let's make the Tide at least prove it a little bit, OK? Shaun Dion Hamilton still has to come back strong from an ACL injury; Rashaan Evans now has to excel as a full-time starter and others, such as Christian Miller, have to break out. It probably will happen. But still.

8. WASHINGTON

Azeem Victor, lost to injury late last season, is back as a first-team All-Pac-12 performer, joined by second-teamer and fellow senior Keishawn Bierria. The intrigue is at outside linebacker, where Washington is looking for pass-rush replacement, but talent and depth suggest Chris Petersen will have answers.

9. WISCONSIN

The Badgers have all kinds of goodies at inside linebacker, with multiple players having NFL futures. T.J. Edwards had a team-high 89 tackles; Jack Cichy was a force in only seven games due to injury; Ryan Connelly made 59 tackles; Chris Orr is coming back from injury. Cichy will be the emotional heart of a defense that is, *gulp*, replacing T.J. Watt and Vince Biegel on the outside.

10. MIAMI

The Hurricanes had this crazy idea of starting three freshmen at linebacker last season. Two — Shaquille Quarterman and Michael Pinckney — earned Freshman All-America honors. Quarterman could be just a regular All-American this season. Mark Richt isn't so crazy now.

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. FLORIDA STATE

The Seminoles defense had some rough games last season, but it's nothing that Superman can't fix. We're eager to see FSU safety Derwin James line up all over the field, with Tarvarus McFadden (eight interceptions last season), holding down a cornerback spot. First read for opposing quarterbacks: All-American DB. Second read: All-American DB.

2. ALABAMA

When talking about the Tide secondary, much of the oxygen will be used to tout the versatile Minkah Fitzpatrick, but the return of speedy senior cornerback Anthony Averett — who was projected as a potential second-round pick this year — is not to be underestimated. Hard-hitting Ronnie Harrison is back at free safety; converted sophomore receiver Trevon Diggs emerged at cornerback in the spring, and seniors Tony Brown and Hootie Jones have seen their share of big-boy college football.

3. FLORIDA

The Gators intercepted 16 passes last season, allowing only eight TD throws, and were second nationally in passing yards allowed (148.5). There is retooling to be done; gone are three second-day draft picks — CB Teez Tabor, CB Quincy Wilson and S Marcus Maye — but the drop-off won't be unreasonably steep. Returning is veteran/versatile cornerback Duke Dawson, the team-leading tackler in safety Marcell Harris, the Outback Bowl MVP in corner Chauncey Gardner and experienced senior safety Nick Washington.

4. USC

We were not expecting to be rating the Trojans this high after Jim Thorpe Award winner Adoree' Jackson went to the NFL and safety Leon McQuay III finished his eligibility. But USC comes at you with waves of DB talent. Junior corner Iman Marshall is a two-year starter with six interceptions and no shortage of confidence. Marvell Tell III and Chris Hawkins are back as starting safeties. A highly touted recruiting class could help, including five-star Greg Johnson, a play-anywhere-on-the-team guy ... just like Jackson was.

5. STANFORD

Nobody coaches up defensive backs better than Stanford's Duane Akina, and he has plenty of raw material to work with. Long, lean corner Quenton Meeks and safety Justin Reid, both juniors, pace a secondary that will help offset the loss of some pass-rushing force up front. Said coach David Shaw this spring: "I love our secondary."

6. GEORGIA

Senior safety Dominick Sanders has been around long enough to intercept 12 career passes, leading a veteran secondary that allowed only 183.8 passing yards per game last season. The addition of early-enrolled five-star Richard LeCounte helps ease the loss of "star" safety Maurice Smith.

7. LOUISVILLE

All-America candidate Jaire Alexander holds down one cornerback spot. He's surrounded by veterans Trumaine Washington and Chucky Williams. Senior cornerback Shaq Wiggins, injured for part of last season, transferred in the spring (his journey: Georgia to Louisville to Tennessee), but new coordinator Peter Sirmon has options.

8. VIRGINIA TECH

The Hokies will continue to tinker with their mix-and-match pieces in fall camp, but senior cornerback Brandon Facyson will be one anchor after flirting with a decision to go to the NFL after last season. Greg Stroman, Adonis Alexander, Terrell Edmunds, Mook Reynolds, top recruit Devon Hunter ... we're confident coordinator Bud Foster will figure it out.

9. OHIO STATE

Don't worry about the Buckeyes. In 2015, they lost three starting DBs, including Eli Apple and Vonn Bell, early to the NFL Draft. Those losses were so devastating that Ohio State was seventh nationally in pass defense and went to the College Football Playoff. OSU put three (!) of those 2016 defensive backs into the first round of the NFL Draft ... so now what? Corner Denzel Ward, safety Damon Webb and blue-chip recruits say, "Don't worry about the Buckeyes."

10. LSU

Most teams would love to have cornerbacks Donte Jackson and Kevin Toliver. That's enough for Tigers fans to keep thinking their team is the true DBU.

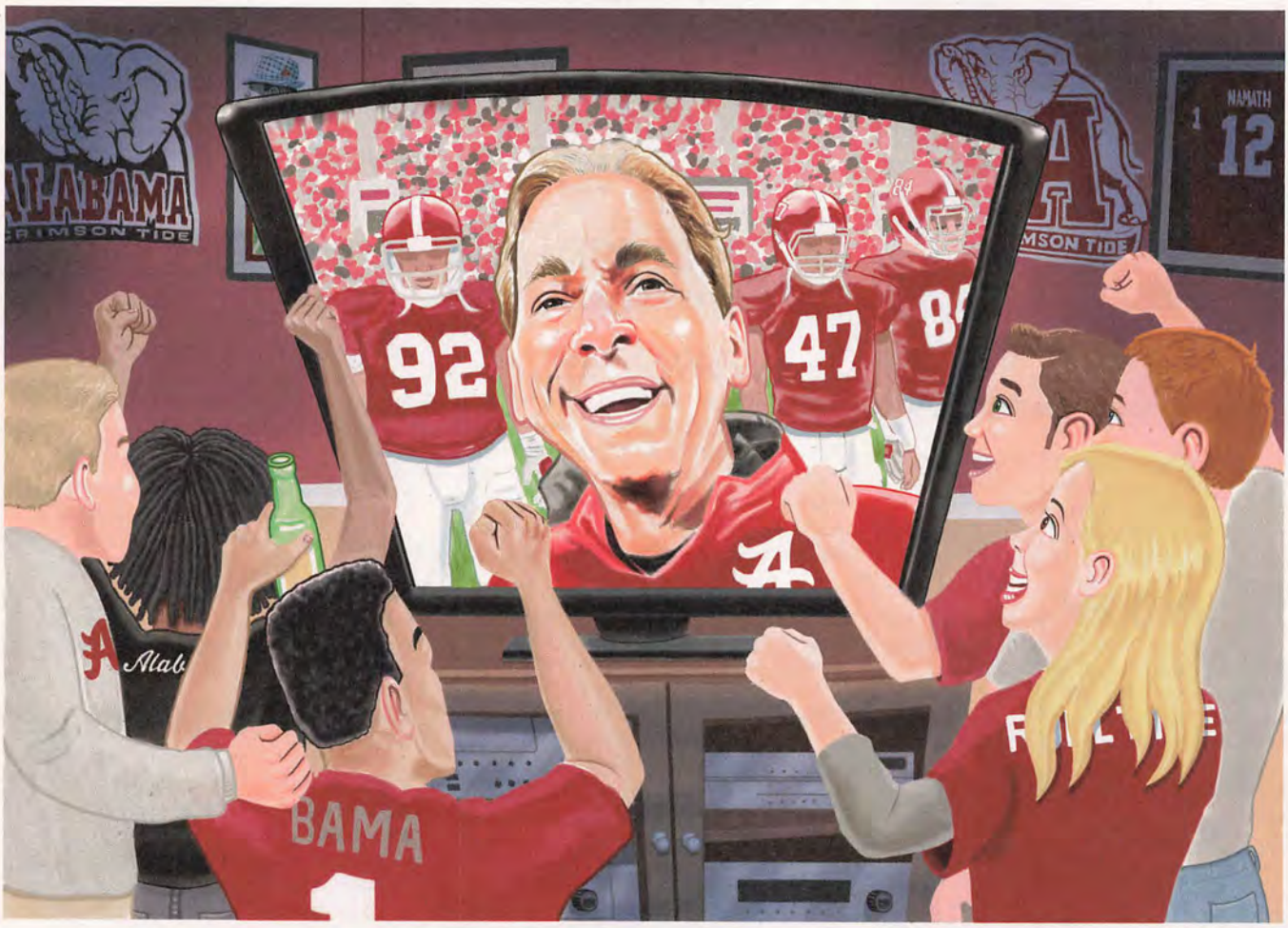
SCOPING THE NATION

No. 1 in the eyeballs of their countrymen

ALABAMA

BY ANTHONY GIMINO AND STEVE GREENBERG

Illustration by Tim Williams



No. 1 in national championships, No. 1 in the preseason, and No. 1 in the Nielsen Ratings — which is where the eyeballs, the recruits, and the money is ...

And just like Michael Corleone in the Godfather ... Alabama keeps pulling us back in. And we don't just mean those of us huddled at *Lindy's* Headquarters. And we don't simply mean parents who name their babies "Saban." And we're talking about a lot more than folks who see houndstooth as the height of fashion ...

We're talking about you, Mr. and Ms. College Football Fan.

It's beyond your capabilities to look away. You can't help it.

You love Alabama. You hate Alabama. You love to hate Alabama.

But whoever you are, you damn sure are *watching* Alabama.

An estimated 121.3 million viewers watched the Tide last season. Yep. One hundred twenty-one point-three million viewers.

Perhaps it was only to catch a rare glimpse of Nick Saban smiling — reports of Bigfoot dining on a plate of ribs at Dreamland are more frequent — but viewers seem to have no escape from the gravitational pull of the Crimson Tide.

That's according to TV ratings compiled by Sports Media Watch, and ... considering that the 2015 Alabama Crimson Tide drew a couple million *more* than that is just plain ridiculous. It means that roughly 125,000,000 viewers a season have been on the Bama bandwagon in some form for a while now.

And that's way more than anybody else in college football history. Certainly the game has changed with the 12-game regular season, conference championship games, and the two-game playoffs, but comparing round numbers, the Tide drew some 35 million more viewers than national champ Clemson did last season.

The Tigers reached about 87 million. Ohio State was at about 81 million viewers. Notre

Dame, in a miserable bowl-less season, attracted about 45 million.

Consider that even when ND reached the title game in 2012, Alabama not only thrashed the Fighting Irish on the field, but had better season-long ratings, too.

Granted, a few games that appeared on regional cable networks don't show up in the ratings, but we're close enough.

And that red bandwagon with the elephant driving does not appear to be slowing down any time soon. At least not on the field, where the Crimson Tide is almost universally penciled in to once again roll to the College Football Playoff.

Of the 10 most-watched games of 2016, Alabama was involved in five of them. Tops on the list was the Michigan-Ohio State game, which drew 16.8 million viewers, which was college football's highest regular-season game in five years. That was Michigan's only visit to the top 10 list of most-watched games in '16, and the Buckeyes had only one other.

Beyond the regular season, Alabama had:

The SEC title game against Florida (11.1 million viewers, the most-watched of all the conference championship games).

A national semifinal against Washington (19.3 million, slightly more than the Clemson-Ohio State semi).

The national championship against Clemson (25.3 million).

How big is the interest in Alabama? The Tide drew 2.4 million viewers on Nov. 19 against lower-division Chattanooga. That was nearly identical to a game between Virginia Tech and Notre Dame — Notre Dame!

Overall, TV ratings were actually slightly down last season. Even for the title game rematch. But total viewership remains strong. The state of the game remains strong, particularly as the networks and conferences dip their toes into online delivery.

ESPN regular-season games were streamed on more than 15 million unique devices last season, a 17 percent increase. In the era of Peak TV, live sports remain one thing that few people time-shift onto their DVR. Man, do advertisers LOVE that. The games draw eyes all at the same time.

And no team draw eyes as intently as Alabama.

The Tide has won four of the past eight national titles and has yet to wear out its welcome.

Will the Tide be No. 1 again in the polls and the ratings? We'd tell you to stay tuned ... but we know you will.

COMINGS, GOINGS

The Football Bowl Subdivision is pumped up to 130 teams this season with the addition of Coastal Carolina into the Sun Belt and the resurrection of UAB into Conference USA. The school had shut down the program after the 2014 season because of financial concerns.

In all, the FBS has grown by 11 teams in the past decade and by 15 since the turn of the century. Of those, UConn, which was new in 2000, is the only one to make a major bowl, losing to Oklahoma in the 2011 Fiesta Bowl.

Idaho will be the first program to drop from the FBS level, which it will do after this season. The Sun Belt is booting its two geographically miscast teams — the Vandals and New Mexico State — after this season, with Idaho deciding to fall back to the FCS. The Aggies, meanwhile, will try to make a go of it as an independent in 2018.

The FBS will stay at 130 teams next season with the addition of Liberty as an independent, jumping from the FCS.

PROJECTING THE BIG BOWLS

There's been a certain sameness through three years of the College Football Playoff. Three different winners (Ohio State, Alabama, Clemson), but only seven total programs in the 12 overall spots.

The Tide has made the final four all three times; the Buckeyes and Tigers twice. Also appearing: Oregon, Florida State, Oklahoma, Michigan State and Washington.

The past two Alabama-Clemson title games have been classics. The rest of it, not so much. Ohio State pulled off a stunning 42-35 upset of Alabama in a 2014 semifinal game, but the margin of victory in the other five semis have been a turn-off-the-channel, let's-go-to-a-party 39, 31, 17, 20 and 38 points.

As for this season, the Rose and Sugar take their second turns hosting the semifinals, which are back on New Year's Day — not New Year's Eve, like the past two seasons. And the TV networks rejoice.

Here's the when, where, and our projected who for this season:

COTTON BOWL

Saturday, Dec. 30
Arlington, Texas • AT&T Stadium
At-large vs. At-large
Lindy's pick: Oklahoma St. vs. Wisconsin

ORANGE BOWL

Saturday, Dec. 30
Miami • New Miami Stadium
ACC vs. Big Ten/SEC/Notre Dame
Lindy's pick: Clemson vs. Auburn

FIESTA BOWL

Saturday, Dec. 30
Glendale, Ariz. • University of Phoenix Stadium
At-large vs. At-large
Lindy's pick: Washington vs. Penn State

PEACH BOWL

Monday, Jan. 1
Atlanta • Mercedes-Benz Stadium
At-large vs. At-large
Lindy's pick: USF Vs. Oklahoma

CFP SEMIFINAL: ROSE BOWL

Monday, Jan. 1
Pasadena, Calif. • Rose Bowl
National semifinal
Lindy's pick: Ohio State vs. USC

CFP SEMIFINAL: SUGAR BOWL

Monday, Jan. 1
New Orleans • Superdome
National semifinal
Lindy's pick: Alabama vs. Florida State

CFP CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Monday, Jan. 8
Atlanta • Mercedes Benz Stadium
Lindy's pick: Alabama vs. USC

*(**Note:** At-large means any team in the country — so probably a Power 5 conference team, while Group means the top team from the small conferences: Group of Five)*

SCOPING THE NATION

Remember These Guys?

Don't forget about these 20 game-changing players who missed all, or most, of last season:

1. S **Derwin James**, Florida State — Well, he is our preseason Defensive Player of the Year ...

2. QB **Josh Rosen**, UCLA — He was the young, hot QB in LaLaLand until he suffered a season-ending shoulder injury while some dude named Sam Darnold emerged cross town.

3. DL **Christian LaCouture**, LSU — Sat out 2016 because of a preseason ACL tear, but he'll be back in the mold of an LSU defensive lineman ... NFL bound.

4. LB **Skai Moore**, South Carolina — Earned second-team All-SEC honors in 2015 before suffering a neck injury. Trying to lead the Gamecocks in tackles in all four of his seasons.

5. LT **Tyrell Crosby**, Oregon — Ducks need his healthy return after he played in only two games due to a foot injury last season, leaving the offense to often rely on four starting freshmen on the line. And you wonder why UO struggled.

6. WR/Ret **Janarion Grant**, Rutgers — When this dynamic playmaker suffered a broken ankle last September, there went the only reason to watch the Scarlet Knights.

7. TE **Alize Mack**, Notre Dame — Mack (who has changed his last name from Jones) missed last season as penance for substandard academics, but he was back with a vengeance in the spring. He's your basic matchup nightmare at 6-4, 245, able to line up anywhere he dang well wants.

8. RB **Rodney Anderson**, Oklahoma — Has one carry in his first two years on campus because of back-to-back season-ending injuries, costing him the opportunity to dip his toes into the deep end of the college football pool. It's time to jump now, emerging this spring as the primary replacement for Samaje Perine and Joe Mixon.

9. OL **Toa Lobendahn**, USC — Versatile front man suffered torn left knee ligaments in the 2016 season-opener, which came about a year after he wrecked his right knee. The Trojans need to plug him in somewhere on the line that was mix-and-match in the spring.

10. WR **Marcell Ateman**, Oklahoma State — His 6-4 size and deep-ball ability is a great complement to the quickness of WR James Washington in OSU's hot-fire passing attack. Ateman caught 45 passes for 766 yards and five TDs in 2015 before sitting out last season with a foot injury.

11. CB **Shaun Crawford**, Notre Dame — Was in line to start as the nickel back as a true freshman in 2015. Tore his ACL in camp. Debuted in 2016 with an interception against Texas. Tore an Achilles' tendon a week later. If he stays healthy, Crawford could star for new coordinator Mike Elko.

12. DE **Kylie Fitts**, Utah — The Utes lost four games last season, all by less than a touchdown. Might this All-Pac-12-caliber pass rusher make a difference? He played in only the first two games last season.

13. DL **Terry Beckner**, Missouri — His past two seasons cut short by knee injuries, he should be good to go in the fall, when the Tigers need him to be back to his 2015 Freshman All-American form.

14. LB **Dante Booker**, Ohio State — His time as a starter was brief, suffering a season-ending knee injury in the 2016 opener. Booker, a fourth-year junior, has always seemed on the verge of something big. This could be his time, back as a projected starter.

15. WR **Matt VandeBerg**, Iowa — Life was really good last Sept. 10 when he made seven catches for a career-best 129 yards and a touchdown in a win over Iowa State, after which he proposed to his girlfriend (she said yes!). About two weeks later, he suffered a season-ending foot injury in practice. After getting a medical redshirt, the senior will be adding new chapters to his 106 career catches.

16. WR **Mike Dudek**, Illinois — He needs a break. He made 76 catches for 1,038 yards as a true freshman in 2014 but hasn't been seen in a game since, thanks to two ACL tears in his right knee.

17. WR **Dre Massey**, Florida — There was all this preseason buzz last fall about Massey, a junior college transfer, one of those do-it-all playmakers the Gators needed so badly. His season ended with a torn ACL on the opening kickoff. Florida still needs him in the same way in 2017.

18. LB **Christian Sam**, Arizona State — So much ailed the Sun Devils' defense last season that one man might not be the answer, but he might be the kind of centerpiece that makes everyone else better. He played in only the opener last season because of a foot injury.

19. PK **Rafael Gaglianone**, Wisconsin — Love this big fella. He had to sit for 11 games last season because of a back injury, but he was back banging balls between the uprights in the spring. He is 44 of 57 on field-goal attempts in his career; could be somewhat important for the Badgers this season.

20. RB **J.J. Taylor**, Arizona. He's small, oh-so-quick, and way under the radar. The 2016 true freshman had 97 yards rushing in the second half of an early-season game against Washington before breaking an ankle. The Huskies escaped in overtime and went on to the College Football Playoff. Maybe if Taylor hadn't gotten hurt ...

Josh Rosen | Photo by Mark J. Rebilas-USA TODAY Sports

Illustration by Tim Williams

Heisman Watch

Our favorites:

1. QB Sam Darnold, USC. Trojans legend Marcus Allen said over the winter that Darnold reminded him of a certain Notre Dame quarterback of days gone by — Joe Montana. OK. We get it. Darnold has that whole "California cool" vibe, but to modernize the comparisons, we're going with Ben Roethlisberger. The kid is a beast.

2. QB Baker Mayfield, Oklahoma. He has creativity, escapability (never mind that offseason arrest video) and moxie. Lots and lots of moxie. Really, the dude leads the country in moxie. How has ESPN not made this an official stat? Oh, and he wins. Oh, part II: He was the nation's most efficient passer last season.

3. QB Lamar Jackson, Louisville. He handled his grip on the 2016 award as loosely as he did the football in the red zone in the final couple of games of last season, but he had sprinted to such a Heisman lead that a stumble and some fumbles didn't stop him from a comfortable win over Deshaun Watson.

4. QB J.T. Barrett, Ohio State. He was fifth in the Heisman voting as a freshman in 2014. To be still in school in 2017 wasn't the plan ... but if this path ends in some sort of a ring that will mean Barrett likely will have done something great, which means he's basically back where he started — in the Heisman top five.

5. RB Saquon Barkley, Penn State. Throwing in the top running back in case no quarterback rules the Heisman race.

6. QB Mason Rudolph, Oklahoma State. He threw for 4,091 yards last season and has as many playmaking friends as any quarterback in the country.

7. QB Jalen Hurts, Alabama. Two things are really important here: QB. Alabama. But he won't throw it enough. Absolutely no way. Will he?

8. RB Derrius Guice, LSU. If he gets 300 carries like Leonard Fournette did in 2015, then this is too low.

9. QB Trace McSorley, Penn State. He'll keep throwing lovely deep balls while cutting down on his mistakes.

10. RB Bo Scarbrough, Alabama. There's no way he gets enough touches. Absolutely no way. Is there?

THE HEISMAN CURSE

Let's start with Lamar Jackson. Well, not actually Lamar Jackson. The *concept* of Lamar Jackson. The concept of a Heisman winner trying to complete the bookends and take home a second stiff-armed trophy.

Since 2003, seven Heisman winners have returned to school, looking to double up on Heisman glory and join Ohio State running back Archie Griffin as the only two-time winner. Each has come up short, and none has managed to get closer than third place the following year.

- Oklahoma's **Jason White** (2003 winner) finished third in 2004.
- USC's **Matt Leinart** (2004) was a *waaaay* distant third to teammate Reggie Bush, who later had to vacate the award due to the NCAA sanctions.
- Florida's **Tim Tebow** (2007) took two more at-bats when the trophy was at stake, but he was left on third a year later (even as the Gators went on to win the national title over Oklahoma and its Heisman-winning quarterback) and he grounded out weakly in 2009, finishing fifth.
- Oklahoma's **Sam Bradford** (2008) was injured early in 2009 and appeared in only three games.
- Alabama's **Mark Ingram** (2009) couldn't follow up on his surprising sophomore season and narrow win over Stanford's Toby Gerhart, going from 1,658 rushing yards to 875 in 2010. He was not in the Heisman top 10, as Auburn's Cam Newton won.
- Texas A&M's **Johnny Manziel** (2012) ... say, whatever happened to that guy? (Well, he was fifth in the Heisman voting a year later).
- Florida State's **Jameis Winston** (2013) dropped to sixth in the balloting after returning to school, his 18 interceptions no match for the top-notch efficiency of winning Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota.

This is the long way of saying Jackson won't win it in 2017.

We have a little bit of the Heisman curse going on. Not only does the returning Heisman winner have to be deemed better than everyone in the country for the second season in a row, he has to live up to his own Heisman-winning season. Because what's the fun of voting for a guy who wasn't as good as he was the year before?

Maybe Jackson can be that guy. It would be hard for him to be any better, any more jaw-dropping, as a runner, but he DOES have room to grow as an accurate passer. But we're not buying it. It's just too hard to win twice.

SCOPING THE NATION

COACHING CHANGES

THIS FINE OLD COACHING CAROUSEL, IT KEEPS SPINNIN' AROUND ...

BAYLOR

Out: Jim Grobe
In: Matt Rhule

Are we the only ones who find this marriage of Rhule — a Penn State alum and New York City native — and Baylor all kinds of odd? It really is, yet that doesn't mean Rhule can't straighten out the Bears program. He's young, intense, driven and coming off a rock-solid run at Temple. Whether or not he and Bears backers can relate to each other, we'll just have to see.

CALIFORNIA

Out: Sonny Dykes
In: Justin Wilcox

What have the Bears been horrendous at for years upon years? Defense, of course. What has Wilcox been doing for the past decade-plus? Coordinating defenses at one big-time program after another. On that count alone, this hire smacks of horse sense. It is, however, Wilcox's first head job. To his credit, he has surrounded himself with a staff that includes ex-head coaches at the coordinator positions. That could be just crazy enough to work very nicely.

CINCINNATI

Out: Tommy Tuberville
In: Luke Fickell

Anyone who judges Fickell on the 6-7 record he had at Ohio State while bridging the divide from Jim Tressel to Urban Meyer is completely missing the point. Fickell was on the upswing then as a coach, and now he's ready to do this thing for real. He's Ohio to the core and has been around great — not good, great — coaches, and you'd better believe he has been starving for his next (and first real) shot. The Bearcats got better the day they hired him.

CONNECTICUT

Out: Bob Diaco
In: Randy Edsall

Yes, this happened. Edsall — for better or worse — is back in Storrs. It's a pleasant reminder of how well-thought-of Edsall was during his first run atop the Huskies program; there were some great times. Yet there's no overstating the degree to which he flopped at Maryland. Can he recreate the mojo he once had? After three forgettable seasons on Diaco's watch, the program has a long way to go just to be decent again.

FLORIDA ATLANTIC

Out: Charlie Partridge
In: Lane Kiffin

This is just massively fun. We're all going to enjoy the heck out of this from a voyeuristic standpoint, and in the meantime, Kiffin could light a fire under Owls football and totally transform the program. Or not. Either way, America will be watching. And isn't that the essential point of this hire? It's a public-relations coup for as long as Kiffin is there, which he surely hopes isn't long at all.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL

Out: Ron Turner (Ron Cooper was interim coach last eight games)
In: Butch Davis

Are we really going to sit here and blame FIU for hiring a coach who was a central figure in a giant academic scandal at North Carolina? OK, maybe we're being too grim to raise questions about it. Maybe we're crazy not to. Regardless, this is a must-watch development. Davis once was as big-time as college football gets. He was a head coach in the NFL. And now he's ... here. Gotta think the Panthers will get better, right?

FRESNO STATE

Out: Tim DeRuyter (Eric Kiesau was interim coach last four games)
In: Jeff Tedford

Hello — great fit. Tedford, 55, played quarterback at Fresno State and has California in his DNA. There was a time when this guy was considered one of the top offensive minds in college football. His road since leaving Cal in 2012 has been fairly winding, but it refreshed and restored him. Watch the Bulldogs — who've become truly terrible of late — return to relevance on Tedford's watch.

GEORGIA STATE

Out: Trent Mikes (Tim Lappano was interim coach last two games)
In: Shawn Elliott

There's something innately trustworthy in men who've made their bones coaching offensive lines, as Elliott did at South Carolina and at Appalachian State before that. He'll undoubtedly be a grinder. This is his first head job, though, not counting his 1-5 stint as the Gamecocks' interim coach in 2015. Elliott is a solid guy — the Panthers are in strong hands.

HOUSTON

Out: Tom Herman (Major Applewhite coached bowl game)
In: Major Applewhite

The Herman thing had a disappointing ending, but no Cougars fan possibly could've thought he'd be around for long. Applewhite is a feel-good replacement, a beloved former University of Texas quarterback who has paid his dues as an assistant and just might be of a mind to stay awhile and program-build at a school that has had great trouble hanging on to its coaches. Recruiting should be an immediate and lasting success.

INDIANA

Out: Kevin Wilson
In: Tom Allen

Indiana native: check. IU alum: check. Great attitude: check. Yet we don't know a great deal about Allen, who was the Hoosiers' defensive coordinator last season. The unit improved, yes, but Allen doesn't have the resume predecessor Wilson brought to the job. Does anyone out there see him driving the Hoosiers to new heights in the powerhouse Big Ten East? Hello? Anyone?

LSU

Out: Les Miles (Ed Orgeron was interim coach last seven games and named head coach before bowl game)
In: Ed Orgeron

Everybody loves Coach O, right? He was really good last season — just what the Tigers needed — and he fits like a glove in his home state. Players love him. Recruits

love him. Everyone he meets loves him, or at least wants to be his buddy. So why is there (a lot of) skepticism about his chances to maximize what LSU can be? Orgeron will be 56 when the season starts and still battling the perception that he isn't CEO material. Whatever plays out, it'll be fascinating to watch.

MINNESOTA

Out: Tracy Claeys
In: P.J. Fleck

Only 36, Fleck brings irrepressible energy to the program, and he owns the trademark "Row the Boat." He's an all-out attitude guy who should instill a positive culture at a place that needs it and will fight tooth-and-nail on the recruiting trail. Fleck's work at Western Michigan, where the Broncos started 13-0 in 2016, was off the charts. The Big Ten West offers lots of room for growth. Only question: Will Minnesota be able to keep him around long-term? **A LINDY'S TOP FIVE HIRE.**

NEVADA

Out: Brian Polian
In: Jay Norvell

Good luck finding a football coach who hustled more than Norvell did over the past three decades. The 54-year-old is on his 10th collegiate stop. He also spent six years as an assistant in the NFL. And now he's apparently ready to be a head coach for the first time. Does Norvell even know how to settle in and not look for his next landing spot?

OREGON

Out: Mark Helfrich
In: Willie Taggart

Sure, this could work. Taggart made Western Kentucky better. Then he made USF better. So he's something of a builder, and the Ducks do indeed need to be rebuilt. But the native Floridian is a long way from where his roots are, both as a citizen and as a coach, and that's always cause for a dollop of skepticism. Oregon fell so far, and so fast, at the back end of Helfrich's run that it might be easy to underestimate the task Taggart has in front of him. Note: Jim Leavitt as defensive coordinator was a strong move.

PURDUE

Out: Darrell Hazell (Gerad Parker was interim coach last six games)
In: Jeff Brohm

What Brohm did in three years at Western Kentucky was just plain magical — Hilltoppers football was an absolute blast. It's a heck of a jump, though, from WKU to Purdue … actually, check that. It really isn't. Brohm probably has taken a slight step down in terms of the quality of his players, though the step up in competition is severe. But this hire makes all kinds of sense. Brohm should be the Boilermakers' best coach since Joe Tiller. **A LINDY'S TOP FIVE HIRE.**

SAN JOSE STATE

Out: Ron Caragher
In: Brent Brennan

There's no question Brennan has the background for this post. He coached in the Pac-12 for the past six seasons. He worked at SJSU for six years before that under head coaches Dick Tomey and Mike MacIntyre. The Spartans need someone who can make them relevant again. The past few seasons — since MacIntyre left — have left much to be desired.

TEMPLE

Out: Matt Rhule (Ed Foley coached bowl game)
In: Geoff Collins

Kudos to Temple for thinking outside the box on this hire by going with a guy who'd spent his entire career coaching in the South, the past half-decade as a defensive coordinator in the SEC. This is Collins' first time as a head coach, and it's always difficult to predict how that'll go. The Owls' previous three coaches — Al Golden, Steve Addazio and Rhule — left for bigger jobs, for whatever that's worth.

TEXAS

Out: Charlie Strong
In: Tom Herman

Is it too much to call this a grand-slam hire? At the least, it's probably premature. Yet there are so many reasons this should work out well. Herman has strong in-state recruiting ties, not only from his brief time as head coach at Houston, but also from previous bounce-arounds as a young assistant. His offensive style meshes nicely with the way high school ball is played in much of the state. The Longhorns return starters galore, so there's every chance to hit the ground running. And, hey, Houston beat Oklahoma last season — that's encouraging. **A LINDY'S TOP FIVE HIRE.**

USF

Out: Willie Taggart (T.J. Weist coached bowl game)
In: Charlie Strong

Breaking news: Strong and Texas weren't the greatest fit. But if anyone deserves a do-over, let's agree that it's Strong, who not long ago was universally regarded as one hell of a head coach. The Bulls are loaded with experience, and Strong won't let things drop off. This could be the start — make that the re-start — of something terrific for a guy who undoubtedly will feel more comfortable in Tampa than he did in Austin. **A LINDY'S TOP FIVE HIRE.**

WESTERN KENTUCKY

Out: Jeff Brohm
In: Mike Sanford Jr.

First of all, give credit to WKU for its previous hires of Willie Taggart, Bobby Petrino and Brohm. And in that vein the Sanford hire just kind of feels right. He has no head coaching track record, but at 35, he has worked at Stanford, Boise State and Notre Dame (and spent a year on Taggert's staff at WKU in 2010). It figures that his dad (who he has hired as an offensive assistant) has had a long career in college football, so he's been around it all his life. He's an up-and-comer. **A LINDY'S TOP FIVE HIRE.**

WESTERN MICHIGAN

Out: P.J. Fleck
In: Tim Lester

All right, so he's not Fleck. He's way old — a truly ancient 40 — and doesn't have a "row the boat"-level motto. But it's cool that he's an alum, isn't it? Lester was a quarterback for the Broncos, and a very good one. And he has worked his rear end off since as a coach, most recently as Purdue's quarterbacks coach in 2016. It would be unfair to judge him against Fleck's 13-win success last season.

P.J. Fleck | Photo by Mike Granse-USA TODAY Sports

SCOPING THE NATION

KNOW THEIR NAMES (ALABAMA EDITION)

Five early-enrolled true freshmen that non-Alabama fans should fear:

1. RB Najee Harris — Highest compliment: He just *looks* like an Alabama running back.

2. QB Tua Tagovailoa — Dude can chuck it. He challenged Jalen Hurts this spring and will be just a heartbeat away.

3. LB Dylan Moses — He ran a 4.46 40 this spring. He is 6-3, 235. So unfair.

4. WR Jerry Jeudy — Five catches, 134 yards, two TDs in A-Day Game.

5. OL Alex Leatherwood — Wouldn't be a shock if he starts at RT this season.

KNOW THEIR NAMES

Ten early-enrolled non-Alabama freshmen who impressed in the spring:

1. RB Cam Akers, Florida State — No. 1 running back in class impressed with vision, versatility; the heir apparent to Dalvin Cook.

2. WR Donovan Peoples-Jones, Michigan — Harbaugh's crew needs fresh pass-catchers, and here is a physical freak who ran a 4.51 and posted a team-best 39-inch vertical in the spring.

3. DT Marlon Tuipulotu, USC — Flipped from Washington late in recruiting; worked with USC's first-team defense in the spring game at a position of need.

4. OL Trey Smith, Tennessee — Emerged as a starter at right tackle in the spring, the young buck on a veteran line.

5. CB Justin Broiles, Oklahoma — The state's No. 1 recruit had all kinds of opportunity to impress in spring. And he did.

6. WR Jhamon Ausbon, Texas A&M — Looked the part in the spring at 6-2, 220. Said coach Kevin Sumlin: "He's put together."

7. DE Jaelan Phillips, UCLA — The nation's No. 1 recruit in the 247Sports Composite saw some time with the first-string unit in the spring, and is expected to be turned loose off the edge this season. Also watch for CB Darnay Holmes, who could run with the 1s in the fall, too.

8./9. CBs Jeffrey Okudah and Shaun Wade, Ohio State — Okudah was the No. 1 cornerback recruit in the country and Wade was No. 2. The Buckeyes' secondary never rests.

10. WR DeeJay Dallas, Miami — The 'Canes have a bunch of great newbies — check out DB Amari Carter, too — with Dallas being a potential multi-purpose weapon on offense right away.

Najee Harris | Photo by Marvin Gentry-USA TODAY Sports

Top 10 Non-Conference Games

1. Alabama vs. Florida State (Atlanta), Sept. 2 — How do you like this kick-off to the season? How would you like it as the ending? You just might get it on Jan. 8, but the loser of this one will lose lots of its margin for error.

2. Oklahoma at Ohio State, Sept. 9 — Why do teams schedule blockbusters like this? Ohio State showed the upside last season, when it used a win in Norman to elevate into the playoff, despite losing its division to Penn State. On the other hand, the Sooners never recovered from early losses at Houston and to the Buckeyes, even though they ran the table in the Big 12. What we're saying is, this is a major tone-setter, either way.

3. Auburn at Clemson, Sept. 9 — The defending national champs get their first big test of the new season, when they will have to get used to sometimes not having the best quarterback on the field. Auburn is better than last year, when it opened the season by having two late shots into the end zone in the 19-13 loss to Clemson.

4. Texas at USC, Sept. 16 — The Longhorns can announce "they're back" under new coach Tom Herman. USC can say the brilliant run at the end of 2016 was no fluke. We can all hope for a game merely half as good as the last time these programs played, for the 2005 national title.

5. Georgia at Notre Dame, Sept. 9 — Kirby Smart didn't dazzle in his debut at Georgia. That's fine. Give the man some time. Time, though, is not what Notre Dame coach Brian Kelly has the luxury of. Cue the South Bend meltdown if the Irish lose their first big game of 2017 after a 4-8 dumpster fire.

6. Texas A&M at UCLA, Sept. 3 — Josh Rosen returns at quarterback for the Bruins, which is a pretty big headline in itself. But the main storyline is that one of these teams will launch its way into the season, while the other will have to settle for a superheated seat for its coach upon leaving the Rose Bowl (A&M's Kevin Sumlin or UCLA's Jim Mora?).

7. Florida State at Florida, Nov. 25 — This rivalry should be getting back to getting great after FSU's recent dominance, winning

six of the past seven. Four times in the stretch, the Gators failed to reach double-digit points.

8. Florida vs. Michigan, Sept. 2 (Arlington, Texas) — Love defense? Two of the top five units from last season test their offseason rebuilds in Jerry's World.

9. USC at Notre Dame, Oct. 21 — Weird: This hasn't been a Top 25 matchup since 2009, which tells you about each program's recent rollercoaster rides.

10. Army vs. Navy, Dec. 9 (Philadelphia) — The Black Knights snapped a 14-game losing streak in the series last season, when it was the most watched Army-Navy game since 1992.

Top 10 Conference Games

1. Alabama at Auburn, Nov. 25 — The Tide held Auburn to four field goals in a 30-12 Iron Bowl laugher last season, but the Tigers have a quarterback (or two) this season. And you know that's what it takes to beat 'Bama — a quarterback.

2. Florida State at Clemson, Nov. 11 — You have to win this to win the Atlantic, to win the ACC, to get a spot in the playoff. The winner of this matchup has gone on to win the division in each of the past eight seasons, and the whole ACC enchilada title for six consecutive seasons. Oh, and two of the past four national championships.

3. Oklahoma at Oklahoma State, Nov. 4 — The way it looks now, the Bedlam winner is essentially guaranteed a spot in the first Big 12 title game since 2010, while the loser could very well end up playing the revenge card in the rematch. (With the Big 12 lacking divisions, the title game will simply pit the top two teams). Sooners have won the past two by a combined 53 points.

4. Penn State at Ohio State, Oct. 28 — The Nittany Lions' game-winning touchdown off a blocked field goal announced Penn State's arrival last season and gave us weeks of debate on the most worthy Big Ten team for the playoff. With Michigan making a teeny-tiny and temporary step back, this one looks to be for the East marbles ... and the winner might actually advance to the CFP this time.

5. Ohio State at Michigan, Nov. 25 — Jim Harbaugh is still losing his shirt over the fourth-down spot that gave the Buckeyes a first down in last season's double-overtime loss (what a game!) in Columbus.

6. LSU at Alabama, Nov. 4 — When we're looking for a big ol' slobberknocker, LSU-Bama is where we go. Ed O's Tigers gave Alabama its only regular-season scare last season before bowing down, 10-0.

7. Louisville at Florida State, Oct. 21 — The revenge angle is delish after the Cardinals ran up 63 points on the 'Noles last season.

8. Stanford at USC, Sept. 9 — The Trojans don't play Washington in the regular season, so this stands as their toughest conference game. USC needs to get physical. Stanford has won the past two.

9. Florida vs. Georgia, Oct. 28 (Jacksonville, Fla.) — Somebody has to win the SEC East. It might as well be the winner of this former cocktail party.

10. Washington at Stanford, Nov. 10 — The Huskies returned to the national stage with a 44-6 victory over the Cardinal last season. This time, this late-season Friday night game will define the Pac-12 North.

Ohio State vs. Michigan | Photo by Greg Bartram-USA TODAY Sports

SCOPING THE NATION

Illustration by Tim Williams

Top 10 QB Transfers

Which transfers are eligible to play at their new school for the first time this season and make a big difference? These 10, that's who.

1. Jarrett Stidham (Baylor to Auburn). Great fit to drive the Gus Bus.

2. Will Grier (Florida to West Virginia). Was 6-0 as Gators' starter in 2015, and Mountaineers coach Dana Holgorsen said this spring that Grier is "as good as advertised."

3. Kyle Allen (Texas A&M to Houston). Former five-star kid fills Greg Ward Jr.'s shoes.

4. Max Browne (USC to Pitt). Grad transfer lost out to Sam Darnold early last season, went across country to find an age edge over Pitt's young posse in bid for playing time.

5. Brandon Harris (LSU to North Carolina). Grad transfer arrives in the summer to, potentially, be Mitch Trubisky's replacement.

6. David Cornwell (Alabama to Nevada). Could be/should be the lucky leading man in Wolf Pack's new pass-first offense.

7. Blake Barnett (Alabama to Arizona State). Shift to more pro-style attack could favor Barnett over returning starter Manny Wilkins.

8. Damian Williams (Mississippi State to Texas State). Ready to light up the Sun Belt.

9. Thomas Sirk (Duke to East Carolina). Sixth-year grad transfer reunites with head coach Scottie Montgomery, a former Duke OC.

10. De'Andre Johnson (Florida State to Florida Atlantic). Controversy followed him from FSU to junior college to FAU, but he could be huge for new coach Lane Kiffin.

NOTE: As of press time, ex-Notre Dame starter Malik Zaire was still choosing his destination.

SIGN ANYTIME

The NCAA Division I Council voted in April to support an early signing period for high school recruits.

The American Football Coaches Association provided wide support for the decision to add a December signing date, which could quiet the circus around recruits who don't want to wait until the first Wednesday in February. Some of these kids don't want all the texts, the tweets, the calls, the social media nonsense, for another six weeks or so.

Fair enough, right?

The 2017 AFCA president, Arizona coach Rich Rodriguez, wants the Signing Day revolution to go further. Way further. As in blow up the whole damn thing.

"I think we should have no Signing Day," he said.

None?

"The school offers, the young man agrees, his family agrees and then you sign and you're good to go," he said.

Wait. No Signing Day? No recruit ripping off a T-shirt to reveal the name of his school, then ripping that one off to reveal a different school? No Three-card Monte with school hats? No breathless all-day ESPN coverage?

"Get out of this ridiculous circus that is national Signing Day," RichRod said. "Kids are jumping out of helicopters announcing where they are going."

Rodriguez cited internal research that showed that about 23 percent of FBS recruits in the latest recruiting cycle de-committed from a school before signing elsewhere. One in four! The "sign anytime" idea — Rodriguez insists there can also be conditions and stipulations to protect the recruit — could turn de-commits to a trickle.

But what else would we talk about after the Super Bowl?

Top Storylines

1. Atlanta early, Atlanta late. There'll be no waiting for the non-conference game of the year in college football — it's Alabama vs. Florida State on the first Saturday of the season at the spectacular new Mercedes-Benz Stadium. The Crimson Tide and Seminoles could be ranked Nos. 1 and 2 in the polls heading in, and both will be aiming to finish on the very same field in the national championship game. Other top early clashes include Florida vs. Michigan that same night in Arlington, Texas, followed by Auburn at Clemson, Oklahoma at Ohio State and Georgia at Notre Dame all one week later. (Check out a fuller list of big games on the previous pages.)

2. The incumbents. Can defending national champ Clemson repeat in the ACC with division rival FSU looking so dialed in? Does Penn State have the unmitigated gall to outmaneuver Ohio State (and Michigan) again in the Big Ten? And just where does Washington get off thinking it — and not USC — is the class of the Pac-12? Oklahoma has its work cut out for it in the Big 12, and you don't need us to tell you the other big dogs of the SEC want nothing more than to take a bite out of Alabama.

3. Full-court-press conferences. It seems everybody's coming hard at the SEC for the unofficial title of best league in the land. The Big Ten had four teams in the top 10 of last season's final AP poll. The Pac-12 had two in the top four. The ACC established itself in a huge way and clearly is on the rise overall, and the Big 12 certainly fancies itself the real deal. The more Alabama dominates the SEC, the more we have to question just how good the football being played around the rest of that league is.

4. Biggest shoes to fill. They're the ones Clemson quarterback Deshaun Watson wore in leading his team — carrying it on his back, more like — to the mountaintop. Is Kelly Bryant, an impressive 6-3, 215-pound junior, going to hold off star-studded freshman Hunter Johnson and intriguing redshirt freshman Zerrick Cooper? None of the three was good enough in spring ball to settle the issue. FSU has no such questions with Deondre Francois around, just saying.

5. And this year's Lamar Jackson will be? Here's a crazy thought: It could be Jackson himself, back at Louisville after a Heisman Trophy season. Other early Heisman contenders include quarterbacks Baker Mayfield of Oklahoma, Sam Darnold of USC and J.T. Barrett of Ohio State, but let's not miss one of the main points of Jackson's 2016 success. In a nutshell: We sure as heck don't know all the guys who are capable of lighting the game on fire in 2017. More fun that way, isn't it?

6. First-year coaches. There's just a tiny bit of pressure on Tom Herman to make magic happen at Texas. Willie Taggart has a brand to save at Oregon. Ed Orgeron wanted LSU desperately, and now he's got it. Matt Rhule has all things Baylor to sort out. You might've heard that Lane Kiffin is back in the game at Florida Atlantic (and Butch Davis at Florida International). Let's see if P.J. Fleck's boat rows at Minnesota and if the real Charlie Strong stands up at USF. Much change, all of it fascinating.

7. Last-year coaches? The hot seat is real — and really hot. So what say you, Mississippi's Hugh Freeze and Notre Dame's Brian Kelly? They're not nearly alone. It's a must-improve season for Texas A&M's Kevin Sumlin, Arkansas' Bret Bielema, Arizona's Rich Rodriguez, Arizona State's Todd Graham, among others. Look, we can't say how squarely they — and many others — are in get-it-done-or-else territory, but the pressure to win has ratcheted up like never before.

8. Notre Change. Much is different in Irish country, particularly the coordinators on eighth-year coach Brian Kelly's staff. In are Chip Long to run the offense and Mike Elko to run the defense, and they're up against it after Notre Dame's disastrous 4-8 campaign in 2016. September has Temple and Georgia visiting South Bend before the Irish head to Boston College and Michigan State; additional road tests await at North Carolina, Miami and Stanford. What, exactly, is the best-case scenario here?

9. Pac-12 quarterbacks. This is, without much question, the prime league for players at the most important position in the sport. USC's Sam Darnold has everyone thinking best-since-Matt Leinart. Washington's terrific Jake Browning is a junior entering his third year as a starter. We've seen how good — and sometimes great — UCLA's Josh Rosen and Washington State's Luke Falk can be. What kind of fit is Arizona State for Alabama transfer Blake Barnett?

10. The playoff. It's in Year 4, for those of you scoring at home. So far it's been pretty good, right? Yet we'll see if a non-league champ makes it into the final four, as Ohio State did a season ago. It wasn't the greatest look. Still waiting on one conference to place two teams into the semifinals. Better yet: Maybe we'll get four unbeaten league champs in 2017? It's the dream scenario.

HEISMAN LONGER-SHOTS

In April, a Las Vegas sportsbook released its Heisman betting odds, so let's go fishing for value:

1. QB **Jarrett Stidham**, Auburn (50-1 odds). Checking the record books here ... but we're pretty sure a first-year junior college transfer QB who began at a four-year school can win the Heisman at Auburn.

2. QB **Shane Buechele**, Texas (50-1). With a little bit of that QB magic from new coach Tom Herman ...

3. RB **Bryce Love**, Stanford (100-1). Speed, agility and the new workhorse at Stanford in the post-Christian McCaffrey era.

SCOPING THE NATION

SNEAK PEAK

By the time NFL commissioner **Roger Goodell** announced the first pick of the 2017 NFL Draft, our pals at NFLDraftScout.com had long been scouting, evaluating, breaking down the next wave of prospects. A year away from the 2018 draft, here is who they had as the top five **SENIORS** on their draft board at each major position group (usually with an emphasis on potential). Check out NFLDraftScout.com to see how it all changes once the games begin.

Mason Rudolph | Photo by Soobum Im-USA TODAY Sports

QUARTERBACK	
1. Mason Rudolph	Oklahoma St.
2. Luke Falk	Washington St.
3. Baker Mayfield	Oklahoma
4. Max Browne	Pittsburgh
5. Quinton Flowers	South Florida
RUNNING BACK	
1. Royce Freeman	Oregon
2. Nick Chubb	Georgia
3. Justin Jackson	Northwestern
4. Ralph Webb	Vanderbilt
5. Akrum Wadley	Iowa
WIDE RECEIVER	
1. James Washington	Oklahoma St.
2. Dante Pettis	Washington
3. D.J. Chark	LSU
4. Simmie Cobbs	Indiana
5. Robert Foster	Alabama
TIGHT END	
1. Troy Fumagalli	Wisconsin
2. Mike Gesicki	Penn State
3. DeAndre Goolsby	Florida
4. Durham Smythe	Notre Dame
5. Marcus Baugh	Ohio State
CENTER	
1. Mason Cole	Michigan
2. Coleman Shelton	Washington
3. Frank Ragnow	Arkansas
4. Bradley Bozeman	Alabama
5. Nick Linder	Miami (Fla.)
OFFENSIVE GUARD	
1. Billy Price	Ohio State
2. Scott Quessenberry	UCLA
3. Cody O'Connell	Washington St.
4. Tyrone Crowder	Clemson
5. Braden Smith	Auburn
OFFENSIVE TACKLE	
1. Mike McGlinchey	Notre Dame
2. Martinas Rankin	Mississippi St.
3. Tyrell Crosby	Oregon
4. Jamarco Jones	Ohio State
5. Zachary Crabtree	Oklahoma St.

DEFENSIVE END	
1. Tyquan Lewis	Ohio State
2. Da'Shawn Hand	Alabama
3. Bradley Chubb	NC State
4. Duke Ejiofor	Wake Forest
5. Chad Thomas	Miami (Fla.)
DEFENSIVE TACKLE	
1. Lowell Lotulelei	Utah
2. Derrick Nnadi	Florida State
3. Maurice Hurst	Michigan
4. Christian LaCouture	LSU
5. Michael Hill	Ohio State
OUTSIDE LINEBACKER	
1. Harold Landry	Boston College
2. Marquis Haynes	Ole Miss
3. Dante Booker	Ohio State
4. Ogbonnia Okoronkwo	Oklahoma
5. Matthew Thomas	Florida State
INSIDE LINEBACKER	
1. Micah Kiser	Virginia
2. Shaun Dion Hamilton	Alabama
3. Azeem Victor	Washington
4. Josey Jewell	Iowa
5. Jack Cichy	Wisconsin
CORNERBACK	
1. Tony Brown	Alabama
2. Brandon Facyson	Virginia Tech
3. Anthony Averett	Alabama
4. Jordan Thomas	Oklahoma
5. Duke Dawson	Florida
STRONG SAFETY	
1. Damon Webb	Ohio State
2. Nick Washington	Florida
3. Trey Marshall	Florida State
4. Steven Parker	Oklahoma
5. Todd Kelly Jr.	Tennessee
FREE SAFETY	
1. Quin Blanding	Virginia
2. Godwin Igwebuike	Northwestern
3. Armani Watts	Texas A&M
4. Marcus Allen	Penn State
5. Chris Hawkins	USC

SIDELINES 2017
USC
USC
USC

STATE
STATE

COLORADO
STATE U
PUCKS
OREGON

GAMECO

BU
A
RIZON
C

National Top 25 — by Barton Simmons, 247Sports.com

1. Alabama

Make it seven for Nick Saban. That's seven straight No. 1 recruiting classes with his latest haul. It's a remarkable feat and it's unprecedented that we actually expect it, but here we are unsurprised that 7 of the top 34 players in the country are heading to Tuscaloosa.

This year Alabama managed to bring in the best receiving corps in America with Calvin Ridley-clone **Jerry Jeudy** out of south Florida, in-state stud **Henry Ruggs**, 6-6 speedster **Tyrell Shavers** and Louisiana playmaker **Devonta Smith** combining for an absurd collection of pass-catchers.

Running back is also ridiculous. Parachuting in to Alabama's already-loaded running back group will be the nation's No. 2 back, 6-2, 227-pounder **Najee Harris** as well as **Brian Robinson**, a four-star with 4.4 speed at 6-1, 225.

Alabama is also adding legitimate depth at the quarterback position. **Mac Jones** was the jewel of Kentucky's recruiting class before decommitting and choosing the Tide, but a five-star lefty gunslinger from Hawaii named **Tua Tugovailoa** is the arm to watch. He is one of the unique quarterback talents in this entire 2017 cycle.

In the trenches, DL **Isaiah Buggs** and **LaBryan Ray** are instant-impact types while **Alex Leatherwood** is that guy on the OL. And don't forget **Dylan Moses**. The Baton Rouge native is a freak athlete that is already wowing in spring ball at linebacker.

2. Ohio State

On a per recruit basis, Ohio State put together the highest rated class in 247Sports history in 2017. Because they didn't have room for a full class, the Buckeyes weren't able to edge Alabama at No. 1 but there's no question that this group can compete for national titles.

Among the most impressive aspects of this effort by Urban Meyer is the work he did out of the region. Three of the top six players in the state of Texas picked the Buckeyes. That includes long, athletic linebacker **Baron Browning**, 6-1 lockdown cornerback **Jeffrey Okudah** and a running back in **J.K. Dobbins** that is as explosive as anyone in the nation.

His quarterback room continues to look like arguably the most talented in college football with the addition of **Tate Martell**, a kid that went 43-0 as a starting quarterback at Bishop Gorman High School throwing for more than 7,500 yards and rushing for more than 2,200 yards in the process.

Other highlights include a road-grader at offensive tackle in **Wyatt Davis** out of California, a beast of an edge pass rusher in **Chase Young** out of Maryland and a Florida cornerback named **Shaun Wade** that had seven interceptions as a senior.

3. Georgia

In his first full cycle as head coach at Georgia, Kirby Smart won back his home state. He landed 12 of the Top 20 players in the state of Georgia and 14 of the Top 22. That's Georgia's best in-state effort in the internet era.

Headlining the haul is quarterback **Jake Fromm**. He's the No. 3 pro-style passer in the country and he's talented enough to push incumbent starter Jacob Eason in practice and make him earn his starts.

Richard LeCounte III and **Deangelo Gibbs** were early enrollees at safety that compose the nation's highest ranked safety duo. Lecounte is ranked No. 2 at the position while Gibbs is ranked No. 4.

Beyond all else, Georgia had to answer some questions at offensive line and it did that in a big way on signing day. The 6-foot-7, 350-pound **Isaiah Wilson**, 6-foot-5, 335-pound **Andrew Thomas** and 6-3, 341-pound guard **Netori Johnson** are the highlights to one of the best offensive line hauls in the 2017 cycle. There could be a true freshman starter or two coming out of that trio.

If those guys are fixing a weakness, **D'Andre Swift** is adding on to a strength. Georgia's running back room is loaded and only getting better with Swift's arrival as he is as complete a back as you're going to find.

4. USC

USC accomplished a rare feat on National Signing Day: the perfect close. Every prospect on the board that Clay Helton wanted, he landed. That group included five-star wide receiver **Joseph Lewis**, elite Utah defensive lineman **Jay Tufele** and 6-6, 280-pound offensive tackle **Austin Jackson** out of Arizona.

There are several highlights to this class that seemed to regain the USC mojo. **Marlon Tuipulotu** is an early enrollee that's an instant-impact guy at defensive tackle. He and Tufele make up the nation's best defensive tackle duo.

While those two man the defensive middle up front, USC also got two of the best in this class to man the defensive middle on the back end in safeties **Bubba Bolden** and **Isaiah Pola-Mao**.

At quarterback USC has tapped into a familiar recipe by landing a big, athletic strong-armed quarterback (Jack Sears) out of San Clemente High School, the same school that produced Sam Darnold.

According to the 247Sports Composite rankings, the two five-stars in this class are **Lewis** and running back **Stephen Carr**. Lewis is a big pass-catcher on the outside while Carr is one of the best backs in the country in what was a loaded running back year.

5. Michigan

As Jim Harbaugh continues his brand building expedition at Michigan, he'll leave one of the year's biggest geographical footprints with his 2017 class. His roster of 30 signees collected from 14 states and two countries. Harbaugh still landed 7 of the top 8 in the state of Michigan while still managing to pull from the likes of Canada, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Iowa, Alabama, New Mexico and Colorado.

The first-year names to watch will be wide receiver **Donovan Peoples-Jones**, one of the most athletic receivers in the country, center **Cesar Ruiz**, a tough, physical competitor and **Benjamin St.-Juste** who is a rare body at corner as a 6-foot-3, 190-pounder.

But Harbaugh wasn't just taking average Joes from around the country. **Aubrey Solomon** out of south Georgia landed at Michigan as the No. 2 defensive tackle in the country and a high priority for the likes of Alabama and Georgia. **Oliver Martin** is a fantastic wide receiver talent out of Iowa and the top player in the state who shunned the Hawkeyes among others to jump on board at Michigan.

To top things off, Michigan is adding quarterback **Dylan McCaffrey** out of Colorado. He's the younger brother of Christian McCaffrey and a football junkie that should do well under Harbaugh's tutelage.

6. Florida State

You can't count on replacing a first-round draft pick at running back with a freshman class but Jimbo Fisher just might have done it this year. Dalvin Cook is gone but in his place arrives the No. 1 running back in the country in **Cam Akers** out of Mississippi. The 5-11, 213-pound Akers is the complete package out of the backfield and his future running mate, **Khalan Laborn** out of Virginia, is the No. 1 all-purpose back. The two should pay immediate dividends in the fall.

The Seminoles are bringing in five-stars on the defensive line too. **Joshua Kaindoh** looks phenomenal in person and has the best edge rush frame in the country. **Marvin Wilson** out of Texas may take that title for defensive tackles. Both could be guys that find snaps immediately in Charles Kelly's system.

Two quarterbacks are joining the fold with this group. **Bailey Hockman** is heading to Tallahassee from one of Georgia's most talented programs at McCeachern High School. Hockman is a polished coach's son that has been playing since his freshman season, but **James Blackman**, out of Glades Central in Florida, is a 6-5 talent with crazy upside. He could be the quarterback of the future for Fisher.

7. LSU

If Ed Orgeron wants LSU to get over that championship hump, he knows that quarterback has to be the answer. To that end, he took two in his first year as head coach: **Myles Brennan** the passer and **Lowell Narcisse** the runner. When healthy, Narcisse is one of the most dangerous dual-threat quarterbacks in the country and Brennan is a record-setting high school passer. Collectively these two can operate any offense.

Defense hasn't been the problem for LSU, but it will continue to be a strength with the talent arriving in this class. **Jacoby Stevens** out of Murfreesboro, Tenn., is the nation's top-ranked safety and he's joined by **Grant Delpit**, the No. 9 ranked player at the position.

K'Lavon Chaisson was a signing day steal out of Texas that LSU was able to lure away from the Longhorns. He's a former basketball player and the best speed rusher in the country. **Jacob Phillips** out of Nashville, Tenn. was committed to Oklahoma before flipping to LSU and as the No. 1 inside linebacker in the country, he could compete to start right away. **Tyler Shelvin** is a 380-pound behemoth at defensive tackle that is strikingly athletic. Consider this defense reloaded.

8. Oklahoma

This cycle saw Bob Stoops bring home his first Top 10 class since 2010. That's a long drought for a program that used to be one of the dominant recruiting forces nationally. The successful resurgence is powered by a talented crop of in-state talent and renewed success in the state of Texas.

Justin Broiles, **Levi Draper** and **Creed Humphrey** lead that in-state push. Broiles is a scrappy, instinctive and athletic cornerback while Draper is a tackling machine at linebacker and Humphrey is a nasty interior presence at center. Both were among the top-ranked players at their positions nationally. In Texas, **Robert Barnes** leads the way. The 6-3 safety is a both a ball-hawk and a big-time hitter that can play in the box. **Chris Robison** is also a Texas native that brings the kind of playmaking ability under center that Lincoln Riley really highlights in his offense.

CeeDee Lamb and **Charleston Rambo** are elite talents at wide receiver that have big-play ability out of high school while **Grant Calceterra** is the mismatch guy at tight end but the possible replacement for DeDe Westbrook could be fellow JUCO talent **Marquise Brown**, a speedy skinny pass-catcher in that Westbrook mold.

9. Auburn

Auburn is home to the single most important newcomer in college football with the addition of **Jarrett Stidham**. Stidham is a five-star quarterback that started a few games at Baylor as a true freshman two years ago before sitting out a year due to the NCAA transfer rule. He's heading to Auburn to be the starting quarterback and he could totally transform the Tigers' offense under new OC Chip Lindsey.

Elsewhere, Auburn is reinforcing its hard-hitting defense with some of the most physical linebackers in the class. **Tadarian Moultry** is a missile that destroys ball carriers. He could start his career as a middle linebacker or an edge pass-rusher. **Kenney Britt** is a middle linebacker all the way but has the same kind of passion for striking. Throw **Markaviest Bryant** in there too as an athletic disruptor on defense, though he's probably an edge guy on The Plains.

Between **Austin Troxell** (6-7, 335 pounds), **Calvin Ashley** (6-6, 310 pounds) and Army All-American **Nick Brahms**, Auburn is getting plenty of beef on the offensive line while one of the sleepers of the SEC could be **Malik Willis**, an athlete that already made waves in the spring as a quarterback for Auburn.

10. Notre Dame

A 4-8 season in South Bend didn't scare away what amounted to Brian Kelly's best recruiting class since 2013, a year in which Notre Dame was coming off a national championship game appearance. The class is built in all the right ways too, with strength in the trenches on both sides of the ball.

On the offensive side, Notre Dame is going to be able to push some people around with **Robert Hainsey**, **Aaron Banks**, **Joshua Lugg** inserted in the offensive line room. All three are ranked within the Top 20 at their positions. If the tight end position is an extension of the offensive line, Notre Dame should be good there too. In **Brock Wright** and **Cole Kmet**, the Irish have two of the nation's top three at the position.

Defensively, **Darnell Ewell** is going to change the dimensions of the Notre Dame defensive line with his strength up front. We think Hawaiian native **Myron Tagovailoa-Amosa** is going to be a quick contributor as well.

Finally, with new faces arriving on the Notre Dame coaching staff, they attracted some new faces late in the game too. Mike Elko lured former Cal commit **Jordan Genmark-Heath** at safety, linebacker coach Clark Lea stole **Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah** from Virginia and new offensive coordinator Chip Long poached speedy receiver **Jafar Armstrong** from Missouri.

11. Florida

It was being billed as a disappointing class for Florida until a furious signing day finish brought the Gators nipping at the national Top 10. Within that close, south Florida native **Tadarrell Slaton** was one of the biggest gets. He's 6-4, 360 pounds and billed as a guard by most, but Florida wanted the Army All-American as a defensive tackle and it got him. But that pull to defense is where a lot of the talent in this class brings us.

In addition to Slaton, **Elijah Conliffe** has a chance to be special as a defensive tackle. **Zachary Carter** is also a beast on the defensive line. Florida should continue to spit out outstanding defensive back talent led by 4.3 speedster **Christopher Henderson** at cornerback, long, rangy corner **Marco Wilson** (the younger brother of 2016 standout Quincy Wilson) and versatile nickel type **Brad Stewart** out of Louisiana.

But where's the offensive talent? There are a few candidates to come in and help Florida find some points. Most talented among them is **James Robinson**, an in-state receiver that has the size to body up smaller DBs and run past bigger ones. **Kadeem Telfort** and **T.J. Moore** also have a chance to really help Florida add some depth on the offensive line as both are big, long athletes with all the physical tools.

12. Texas A&M

One of the biggest priorities for this recruiting cycle for Kevin Sumlin was finding a quarterback that could add immediate depth, if not compete for a starting job. In **Kellen Mond**, the nation's No. 3 dual-threat quarterback, the Aggies think they've found their guy. Mond is big, strong and athletic and with a similar gutty style to former Tennessee quarterback Josh Dobbs.

Whether Mond finds the field or not, his high school wide receiver at IMG Academy may be too talented not to catch some balls this spring. That's because **Jhamon Ausbon** is big and strong at 220 pounds and is a very dependable pass-catcher. He'll be joined by a deep and talented group of wide receivers typical to Texas A&M's usual recruiting. **Hezekiah Jones**, **Roshauud Paul**, **Camron Buckley**, **Camron Horry** and **Keynel McZeal** are all difficult matchups for defenses and help restock the cupboard as the Aggies lose some NFL talent.

Texas A&M always seems to have NFL level offensive linemen and this year's candidates in that regard are **Dan Moore** and **Grayson Reed**, two huge, athletic linemen that will develop into bullies up front.

But defense gets some help too. LB **Anthony Hines**, DT **Jayden Peevy**, and S **Derrick Tucker** are All-American's with NFL talent. Hines and Tucker could be day one contributors.

13. Miami

Mark Richt's first full cycle recruiting at Miami was a success. We say that because he's got a possible day one starter at offensive

tackle in 6-6, 335-pounder **Navaughn Donaldson** that will remind some of Ereck Flowers. He's got a fleet of scary wide receivers led by **Jeff Thomas** out of East St. Louis who is as explosive as any wide receiver in this class. He's got some scary upside prospects led by **Evidence Njoku** (younger brother of David Njoku), offensive tackle **Za'Lontae Hillery** and edge-rusher **Jonathan Garvin** who compiled 25 sacks as a senior.

Richt also landed a couple of talented quarterbacks. One, **Cade Weldon**, is the son of former Florida State quarterback Casey Weldon. The other is a dynamic, athletic live-armed quarterback named **N'Kosi Perry** that needs some polish but has elite tools.

Other wins for Richt included dipping all the way into California to land the No. 6-ranked defensive end, **D.J. Johnson**. We really like the scrappy cornerback **Trajan Bandy** as well as undersized but overproductive wide receiver **Mike Harley** out of local power St. Thomas Aquinas. Led by those two, there are some guys in this class that bring some edge back to The U.

14. Stanford

This was truly a remarkable effort by David Shaw at Stanford. With only 14 scholarships available, the Cardinal was still able to land the nation's No. 14 class. It did that by luring the No. 2 and No. 3 offensive tackles in the country in **Foster Sarell** and **Walker Little**. Little in particular could be a name you see playing meaningful snaps right away as a freshman. It also landed the nation's No. 1 tight end in **Colby Parkinson** as well as the nation's No. 1 quarterback in **Davis Mills** out of Georgia. All of those guys were ranked as five-stars.

But this class isn't just top heavy. It's strong 1 through 14. Some other highlights include **Connor Wedington**, a speedy Washington native that decommitted from Washington to flip to Stanford. **Paulson Adebo** is a big, talented cornerback that decommitted from Notre Dame to join The Cardinal. **Ryan Johnson** is an Alabama native on the defensive line that Stanford beat Auburn for.

Despite no early enrollees and limited numbers, this class has a chance to be one of the most impactful in the country this fall.

15. Penn State

A developing force on the recruiting trail, James Franklin matched his highest ranked recruiting class to date (2015) with his 2017 effort. The biggest name in Franklin's big effort was **Lamont Wade**, an in-state cornerback that makes up for limited size with incredible reactive quickness and instincts. There are parallels between Wade and offensive line commit **CJ Thorpe** too. Like Wade, you'll find other prospects with better measurables than Thorpe but like Wade not many compete like Thorpe does. The interior offensive lineman is big, nasty and physical and those two in-state prospects should add to the competitive environment in State College.

Sean Clifford is the quarterback for this Penn State class and he's a winner with all kinds of intangibles. He'll have a chance to throw to an elite run-after-catch talent in **KJ Hamler** along with a few taller outside threats in **Cameron Sullivan-Brown** and **Mac Hippenhammer**.

On the other side of the ball, defensive line coach Sean Spencer has to be excited about the additions he's collecting led by **Cory Bolds** and **Fred Hansard** out of New Jersey and **Yetur Matos** out of Virginia. These are guys with size and elite athleticism who will add depth to a revolving door of D-line talent in Happy Valley.

16. Clemson

Wondering why Clemson is sitting all the way back at No. 16 in the rankings following a national championship season? It's all about the numbers. The Tigers only had room for 14 signees this cycle and that limited their ceiling, but the 14 guys they brought in are the cream of this 2017 crop.

It starts at quarterback. That's where Clemson is bringing in the No. 2 pro-style quarterback in the country in **Hunter Johnson** as well as the No. 11 pro-style quarterback in **Chase Brice**. Johnson in particular has eyes on freshman playing time after enrolling early.

Whoever wins the starting job at Clemson will have plenty of new toys to play with. **Tee Higgins** is the No. 2 wide receiver in the country and a phenomenal dunker on the basketball court. He has drawn A.J. Green comparisons from the Clemson staff. **Amari Rodgers** was Clemson's top target in the country at its slot receiver spot as well and the two complement each other extremely well. At running back **Travis Etienne** was a pickup out of Louisiana who brings some of the best athleticism out of the backfield that you will find anywhere.

17. Tennessee

When Tennessee brought in-state offensive lineman **Trey Smith** in as an early enrollee in January, it might as well have been bringing in a college transfer as opposed to a high school senior. That's how ready the big 6-6, 313-pounder is. Don't be surprised when he's a true freshman starter in the SEC on the offensive line and that's why he was a monster grab for the Vols this cycle.

There were other big ones though, particularly at running back. That's where Tennessee welcomes the addition of **Ty Chandler**, another in-state prospect out of powerhouse Montgomery Bell Academy. He's a guy capable of true freshman carries and, following the departures of Jalen Hurd and Alvin Kamara, he'll probably get them.

Those guys are no-brainers, but this class is full of up-side sleepers as well. One example is **Theo Jackson**, a long, wiry defensive back that could project to safety or cornerback. Another is **Matthew Butler**, a defensive lineman out of North Carolina that we think could develop into one of the top defensive linemen in this class. **Solon Page III** is a linebacker with legit 4.5 speed and **Josh Palmer** was as senior riser at receiver that all the powerhouses wanted but he chose Knoxville.

18. Maryland

D.J. Durkin was hired at Maryland in part because he had a great reputation as a recruiter. By landing inside the national top 20 in his first full cycle as the head man in College Park, Durkin is already living up to that billing.

For Durkin, it starts at home. He was successful in attracting in-state and D.C. talents such as DB **Deon Jones**, RB **Anthony McFarland**, OG **Marcus Minor**, QB **Kasim Hill**, OT **Jordan McNair** and DT **Cam Spence**. All of those guys are local and all of them are four-star prospects according to 247Sports Composite rankings. That's not all that normal for Maryland.

McFarland, a shifty, explosive back, and Minor hail from Maryland powerhouse DeMatha Catholic. Hill and Spence are teammates at D.C. power St. John's College and bring with them lots of size and ability. Teammates out of Virginia strengthened this class even more. Massive twins **Brandon and Breyon Gaddy** are going to bolster the defensive line, and Bishop Sullivan Catholic running back **Tahj Capehart** is a versatile, all-purpose back.

Marquese Bell is another name that was a premier pickup for the Terrapins. Hailing from New Jersey, the No. 7 athlete in the country could play wide receiver or defensive back on the next level.

19. Oregon

With the hiring of new head coach Willie Taggart and his accompanying coaching staff, Oregon has gone from a deliberate, cautious recruiting program to one that recruits at the same speed as its previous offensive pace. Taggart and company hit the ground running and made a big splash in a short cycle.

Deommodore Lenoir is one of the best playmaking defenders in the country and he was committed to the previous Oregon staff but had to be re-recruited by the new guys before committing again. That was a big pickup and adds to a defensive secondary that will add three four-star cornerbacks arriving in this class with **Thomas Graham** and **Jaylon Redd** rounding out the threesome.

Throughout the defense, Oregon is getting tougher. **Rutger Reitmaier** is an

athletic, versatile defensive lineman that Oregon was able to land out of Nashville. **Sampson Niu** is one of the best thumping linebackers in the country out of San Diego, while **Isaac Slade-Mautautia** out of Hawaii is extremely athletic at the same position.

Look for JUCO offensive tackle **George Moore** to compete for immediate playing time on the offensive line and **Cyrus Habbibi-Likio** may be the sleeper commit of this group as a guy that can be productive at several positions.

20. UCLA

The best player in America will be playing his college football in the Rose Bowl. According to the 247Sports Composite rankings, **Jaelan Phillips** is the class of 2017's top-ranked prospects and he's bringing his immense talents to UCLA, thus adding some major fireworks to an otherwise solid if unspectacular haul.

At 6-5, 250-plus pounds, Phillips is the nation's best edge pass-rusher and he's going to be a force right away in Westwood after enrolling early and competing in spring practice.

Beyond Phillips, UCLA added some improvements on the defensive side of the ball such as five-star cornerback **Darnay Holmes**, the nation's No. 8 defensive tackle **Greg Rogers** and a really sound instinctive cornerback prospect in **Elijah Gates**.

On the offensive side of the ball, UCLA got tougher and more physical. **Stephan Zabie** out of Austin, Texas, is one of the highest upside offensive tackles in the class and could be a major steal. In addition, **Jimmy Jaggers** is a big, physical tight end and **Kanan Ray** is a nasty, tone-setter at offensive guard. At quarterback, UCLA dipped all the way down to Florida to bring in **Austin Burton** out of West Orange High School.

21. South Carolina

If you're looking for a class to buy stock in, South Carolina is a great option. Will Muschamp has a great reputation as an evaluator and this class will reflect well on that reputation.

Already, early enrollee safety **Jaylin Dickerson** has flashed despite being a mid-three-star prospect but once the rest of the talent arrives we expect a lot of these guys to make the Gamecock staff look smart.

At 6-3, Army All-American wide receiver **Ortre Smith** comes in with a high national rating. So too does the 'Tyrann Mathieu'-style cornerback **Jamyest Williams** out of Georgia.

But keep your eye out for some lower-rated prospects to show out, too. We love the athleticism of **Davonne Bowen**, a high school defensive end that has the athleticism to move to linebacker but will be likely one of the fastest players on the team. Linebacker **Damani Staley** has good bloodlines — he's the son of Gamecock great Duce Staley — and makes a lot of plays at linebacker. **Sherrod Greene** is an athletic linebacker out of North Carolina who can absolutely get after the football. **Javon Kinlaw** could be a day-one impact player out of the JUCO ranks based on physical tools alone as a defensive lineman. Top to bottom, this class is deep.

22. Washington

Given the season it had and a couple of big decommitments late in the process, Washington probably would have liked to finish even higher in the rankings than 22 but this is still a very strong effort for Chris Petersen's staff, especially given that it's a small group with only 18 signees. **Salvon Ahmed** leads the way. Ahmed is an Army All-American that is one of the fastest prospects in the country and could play either offense or defense for the Huskies though he likely starts on the offensive side of the ball a la Chico McClatcher.

Hunter Bryant at tight end is another major weapon added on offense. He's got the profile of a guy that can see the field early as the No. 5 tight end in the nation. We're really high on **Ty Jones** as well, a wide receiver out of Utah that offers length and catch radius on the outside that Washington didn't really have in 2016. He's a major jump-ball and deep threat on the perimeter.

Speedy cornerback **Elijah Molden**, long 6-2 cornerback **Keith Taylor** and all-around safety standout **Brandon McKinney** reload a secondary that just lost a slew of talent to the NFL.

23. Nebraska

Mike Riley is trying to make Lincoln, Neb., California East. He's been raiding the West Coast and having a lot of success doing it. In the 2017 class the first dominoes to fall out that way were quarterback **Tristan Gebbia** and his high school wide receiver **Keyshawn Johnson Jr.** Those two guys helped Nebraska build momentum out west that allowed them to land prospects later in the process that typically end up somewhere like USC.

One of those guys was **Tyjon Lindsey**, an undersized but incredibly explosive wide receiver out of national powerhouse Bishop Gorman. Lindsey decommitted from Ohio State to commit to the Cornhuskers and has a chance to provide playmaking ability that few teams can match. Another name to know is **Elijah Blades**, a 6-2 cornerback with legit 4.4 speed that decommitted from Florida to choose Nebraska. Those two are as talented as any skill player in the country at their positions.

A couple of other names to keep an eye on are defensive tackle **Deontre Thomas**, linebacker **Avery Roberts** and wide receiver **Jaevon McQuitty**. Thomas is fun to watch because he uses powerful hands and explosive punch to jar and control offensive linemen. He'll be a Nebraska fan favorite.

24. Mississippi State

An argument can be made that Dan Mullen is one of college football's top quarterback evaluators and developers. He'll have a great opportunity to build on that reputation with the arm coming in with the 2017 recruiting class. **Keytaon Thompson**, the Gatorade Player of the Year in Louisiana, is a unique prospect. Standing at 6-4, 222 pounds, with elite strength and athleticism and a raw if effective passing skills, he's a classic Mullen project. He's also probably the backup quarterback immediately.

The rest of the 2017 class for Mississippi State is heavy on JUCO prospects with nine coming in, led by big-time safety **Johnathan Abrams**, a bounce-back prospect from Georgia. **Lee Autry**, the younger brother of NFL defender Denico Autry and another former Georgia edge defender **Chauncey Rivers**.

From the high school ranks, it's linebacker **Willie Gay** and running back **Kylin Hill** that are the headliners. Gay is one of the most athletic linebackers in the country and a perfect fit to combat spread offenses in today's fast-paced football. Hill is a throwback; a physical running back that has rare feet and agility as well as between-the-tackles power.

25. Virginia Tech

This is a fun group that Justin Fuente has put together in his first full cycle at the helm in Blacksburg because it's full of guys with diverse skills on both sides of the ball. Quarterback **Hendon Hooker** is going to pass anyone's look test as a guy that's 6-4 and 200-plus pounds with a big-time arm. He's got a chance to develop into a special talent under center. Expect him to throw the ball to **Caleb Farley** in the future, a former high school quarterback in his own right that is one of the top athletes along the East Coast with big-time speed.

Tech fans are going to love the tight ends coming into town. **Dalton Keene,** at 6-5, 225 pounds, has a background playing everything from running back to quarterback to linebacker and looks best as a pass-catching tight end. **Drake Deiuliis,** at 6-6, 215 pounds, has similar unique traits and versatility. he was all over the field in high school but his hands and route-running make him a very college-ready pass-catcher.

As far as pure talent and athleticism, the top player in this class is probably on the defensive side of the ball though. **Devon Hunter,** out of Chesapeake, Va., is as athletic as any prospect in the country.

100 FOR 2017

INCOMING FRESHMEN

TOP 100 PLAYERS

Rk.	Name	Pos	Ht.	Wt.	High School/Hometown	School
1.	Jaelan Phillips	WDE	6-5.5	253	Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA)	UCLA
2.	Cam Akers	RB	5-11	213	Clinton (Clinton, MS)	Florida State
3.	Najee Harris	RB	6-2	227	Antioch (Antioch, CA)	Alabama
4.	Alex Leatherwood	OT	6-6	327	Washington (Pensacola, FL)	Alabama
5.	Foster Sarell	OT	6-6.5	311	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	Stanford
6.	Marvin Wilson	DT	6-4	329	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	Florida State
7.	Jeffrey Okudah	CB	6-1.5	190	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	Ohio State
8.	Chase Young	WDE	6-5	251	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	Ohio State
9.	Joshua Kaindoh	WDE	6-6	250	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Florida State
10.	Walker Little	OT	6-7	315	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	Stanford
11.	Baron Browning	OLB	6-2	229	Kennedale (Kennedale, TX)	Ohio State
12.	Donovan Peoples-Jones	WR	6-2	193	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	Michigan
13.	Dylan Moses	OLB	6-3	234	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Alabama
14.	Trey Smith	OT	6-6	313	University School Of Jackson (Jackson, TN)	Tennessee
15.	Davis Mills	PRO	6-3	192	Greater Atlanta Christian School (Norcross, GA)	Stanford
16.	Isaiah Wilson	OT	6-7	350	Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY)	Georgia
17.	Shaun Wade	CB	6-1	177	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	Ohio State
18.	JaCoby Stevens	S	6-2	204	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	LSU
19.	Tee Higgins	WR	6-4.5	188	Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN)	Clemson
20.	Stephen Carr	RB	6-0	202	Summit (Fontana, CA)	USC
21.	Jerry Jeudy	WR	6-1	184	Deerfield Beach (Pompano Beach, FL)	Alabama
22.	Richard LeCounte III	S	5-10.5	174	Liberty County (Riceboro, GA)	Georgia
23.	Darnay Holmes	CB	5-10	190	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	UCLA
24.	Wyatt Davis	OG	6-5	310	St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA)	Ohio State
25.	Aubrey Solomon	DT	6-3.25	288	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	Michigan
26.	LaBryan Ray	SDE	6-4	260	James Clemens (Madison, AL)	Alabama
27.	Calvin Ashley	OT	6-6	310	St. John's College HS (Washington, DC)	Auburn
28.	Khalan Laborn	APB	5-10	199	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	Florida St.
29.	A.J. Epenesa	SDE	6-5	260	Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)	Iowa
30.	Hunter Johnson	PRO	6-2	201	Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN)	Clemson
31.	Joseph Lewis	WR	6-1.5	204	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	USC
32.	Tua Tagovailoa	DUAL	6-1	219	St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)	Alabama
33.	D'Andre Swift	RB	5-8.75	222	St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA)	Georgia
34.	Jedrick Wills	OT	6-5	318	Lafayette (Lexington, KY)	Alabama
35.	Austin Jackson	OT	6-6	280	North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ)	USC
36.	Colby Parkinson	TE	6-7	228	Oaks Christian (Thousand Oaks, CA)	Stanford
37.	K'Lavon Chaisson	WDE	6-4	227	North Shore (Houston, TX)	LSU
38.	Stanford Samuels	CB	6-2	175	Charles W Flanagan (Hollywood, FL)	Florida State
39.	Trevon Grimes	WR	6-3	202	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	Ohio State
40.	Jeff Thomas	WR	5-10	175	East St. Louis (East Saint Louis, IL)	Miami
41.	Jay Tufele	DT	6-3	297	Bingham (South Jordan, UT)	USC
42.	Andrew Thomas	OT	6-4.6	335	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	Georgia
43.	J.K. Dobbins	APB	5-9.5	199	La Grange (La Grange, TX)	Ohio State
44.	Cesar Ruiz	OC	6-3	315	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Michigan
45.	Devon Hunter	S	6-1	205	Indian River (Chesapeake, VA)	Virginia Tech
46.	Lamont Wade	CB	5-9	190	Clairton (Clairton, PA)	Penn State
47.	Jake Fromm	PRO	6-1.25	229	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	Georgia
48.	Austin Deculus	OT	6-6	345	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	LSU
49.	Deangelo Gibbs	S	6-2	204	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	Georgia
50.	Tyjon Lindsey	WR	5-9	161	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	Nebraska
51.	D.J. Matthews	WR	5-11	160	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	Florida St.
52.	Tyler Shelvin	DT	6-2	380	Notre Dame (Lafayette, LA)	LSU
53.	Paris Ford	S	6-1	180	Steel Valley (Pittsburgh, PA)	Pittsburgh
54.	Josh Myers	OG	6-6	306	Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH)	Ohio State
55.	AJ Terrell	CB	6-2	180	Westlake (Atlanta, GA)	Clemson
56.	Luiji Vilain	WDE	6-4	242	Episcopal (Alexandria, VA)	Michigan
57.	Tate Martell	DUAL	5-10.5	203	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	Ohio State
58.	Xavier McKinney	S	6-1	192	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	Alabama
59.	Isaiah Pryor	S	6-1.5	195	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Ohio State
60.	Marlon Tuipulotu	DT	6-2	295	Central (Independence, OR)	USC
61.	Bubba Bolden	S	6-2	192	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	USC
62.	Jacob Phillips	ILB	6-3	225	East Nashville Magnet School (Nashville, TN)	LSU
63.	Anthony Hines	ILB	6-2.5	222	Plano East (Plano, TX)	Texas A&M
64.	Devonta Smith	WR	6-1	165	Amite (Amite, LA)	Alabama
65.	Grant Delpit	S	6-3	191	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	LSU
66.	Deommodore Lenoir	CB	5-10.5	191	Salesian (Los Angeles, CA)	Oregon
67.	Brock Wright	TE	6-4.5	243	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	Notre Dame
68.	Ty Chandler	RB	5-10.5	187	Montgomery Bell Academy (Nashville, TN)	Tennessee
69.	Tedarrell Slaton	OG	6-4	360	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	Florida
70.	Haskell Garrett	DT	6-2	288	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	Ohio State
71.	Navaughn Donaldson	OT	6-6	350	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	Miami
72.	D.J. Johnson	WDE	6-5	240	Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA)	Miami
73.	Willie Gay	OLB	6-1.5	223	Starkville (Starkville, MS)	Mississippi State
74.	Jamyest Williams	CB	5-9	174	Grayson (Loganville, GA)	South Carolina
75.	Jhamon Ausbon	WR	6-2.5	217	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Texas A&M
76.	Jack Anderson	OG	6-5	300	Frisco (Frisco, TX)	Texas Tech
77.	Henry Ruggs III	WR	6-0	175	Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL)	Alabama
78.	Maleik Gray	S	6-2	190	LaVergne (LaVergne, TN)	Tennessee
79.	Justin Broiles	CB	6-0	175	John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK)	Oklahoma
80.	Drew Singleton	OLB	6-2	215	Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ)	Michigan
81.	Robert Hainsey	OG	6-4.5	276	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Notre Dame
82.	Thomas Graham	CB	5-11	175	Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)	Oregon
83.	VanDarius Cowan	OLB	6-4	226	Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL)	Alabama
84.	Cole Kmet	TE	6-5	230	St. Viator (Arlington Heights, IL)	Notre Dame
85.	Jaylon Johnson	CB	6-0.5	181	Central East (Fresno, CA)	Utah
86.	Todd Harris	S	5-11	180	Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA)	LSU
87.	CJ Thorpe	OG	6-3	318	Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA)	Penn State
88.	Tyrell Shavers	WR	6-6	209	Lewisville (Lewisville, TX)	Alabama
89.	Netori Johnson	OG	6-3.25	341	Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA)	Georgia
90.	Kary Vincent	CB	5-10	178	Memorial (Port Arthur, TX)	LSU
91.	Jalen Reagor	WR	5-11	185	Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX)	TCU
92.	Levi Jones	OLB	6-3	215	Westlake (Austin, TX)	USC
93.	Jarez Parks	WDE	6-2.75	253	Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL)	Alabama
94.	Ambry Thomas	CB	5-11.5	174	Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI)	Michigan
95.	Jake Moretti	OT	6-5	285	Pomona (Arvada, CO)	Colorado
96.	Cyrus Fagan	S	6-2	182	Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL)	Florida State
97.	Robert Barnes	S	6-3	194	Southlake Carroll (Southlake, TX)	Oklahoma
98.	Markail Benton	OLB	6-1.5	237	Central (Phenix City, AL)	Alabama
99.	Phidarian Mathis	DT	6-4	287	Neville (Monroe, LA)	Alabama
100.	Anthony McFarland Jr.	APB	5-9	203	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	Maryland

100 FOR 2018

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

TOP 100 PLAYERS

Rk.	Name	Pos	Ht.	Wt.	High School/Hometown	School
1.	Trevor Lawrence	PRO	6-6	196	Cartersville (Cartersville, GA)	Clemson
2.	Xavier Thomas	SDE	6-3	263	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Clemson
3.	Micah Parsons	WDE	6-3	235	Harrisburg (Harrisburg, PA)	Penn State
4.	Zamir White	RB	5-11	195	Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC)	
5.	Patrick Surtain Jr.	CB	6-2	181	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	
6.	Jamaree Salyer	OG	6-4	342	Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA)	
7.	Jackson Carman	OT	6-6	290	Fairfield (Fairfield, OH)	
8.	Matt Corral	PRO	6-2	196	Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA)	USC
9.	Anthony Cook	CB	6-1	168	Lamar (Houston, TX)	
10.	Brey Walker	OT	6-7	320	Southmoore (Moore, OK)	Oklahoma
11.	Jalen Hall	WR	6-4	192	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	
12.	Palaie Gaoteote	ILB	6-2	235	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	USC
13.	Taron Vincent	DT	6-2	285	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Ohio State
14.	BJ Foster	S	6-1	188	Angleton (Angleton, TX)	
15.	Terrace Marshall	WR	6-2.5	192	Parkway (Bossier City, LA)	
16.	Cade Mays	OT	6-5.5	327	Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)	Tennessee
17.	Lorenzo Lingard	RB	6-0	190	University (Orange City, FL)	Miami
18.	Tyreke Johnson	S	6-1	191	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	
19.	Amon-Ra St. Brown	WR	5-11.5	191	Mater Dei (Anaheim, CA)	
20.	KJ Henry	WDE	6-5.5	235	West Forsyth (Clemmons, NC)	
21.	Teradja Mitchell	ILB	6-2	232	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	
22.	Justyn Ross	WR	6-4	197	Central (Phenix City, AL)	
23.	Justin Fields	DUAL	6-3	221	Harrison (Kennesaw, GA)	Penn State
24.	Jacob Sirmon	PRO	6-4	218	Bothell (Bothell, WA)	Washington
25.	James Cook	RB	5-11.5	181	Miami Central (Miami, FL)	Florida State
26.	Anthony Lytton	CB	5-11	170	Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD)	
27.	Emory Jones	DUAL	6-2.5	195	Heard County (Franklin, GA)	Ohio State
28.	Ricky Slade	APB	5-9	195	C. D. Hylton (Woodbridge, VA)	Penn State
29.	Isaac Taylor-Stuart	CB	6-2	187	St Augustine (San Diego, CA)	
30.	Jaiden Woodbey	S	6-1	209	St. John Bosco (Fontana, CA)	Ohio State
31.	Greg Emerson	DT	6-3	296	North Side (Jackson, TN)	
32.	Jaelen Gill	APB	6-1	182	Westerville South (Westerville, OH)	Ohio State
33.	T.J. Pledger	APB	5-8	190	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Oklahoma
34.	Jalen Preston	WR	6-2	212	Manvel (Manvel, TX)	
35.	Brendan Radley-Hiles	CB	5-10	183	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Nebraska
36.	Justin Watkins	WR	5-11	172	Vanguard (Ocala, FL)	Texas
37.	JJ Peterson	OLB	6-1.5	210	Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA)	
38.	Phil Jurkovec	DUAL	6-5	190	Pine-Richland (Gibsonia, PA)	Notre Dame
39.	Kelvin Joseph	CB	6-1.5	191	Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA)	LSU
40.	Trey Hill	OG	6-3.5	346	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	
41.	Tyler Friday	DT	6-3	260	Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ)	
42.	Max Wright	SDE	6-4	270	Taylor (Katy, TX)	
43.	Brennan Eagles	WR	6-3.5	214	Alief Taylor (Houston, TX)	
44.	Caden Sterns	S	6-1	192	Steele (Cibolo, TX)	LSU
45.	Jalen Green	CB	6-1	171	Heights (Houston, TX)	
46.	Derrik Allen	S	6-2	211	Lassiter (Marietta, GA)	Notre Dame
47.	Houston Griffith	CB	6-1	192	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	
48.	Kamryn Babb	WR	6-1	189	Christian Brothers College (Saint Louis, MO)	
49.	Matthew Jones	DT	6-4	305	Erasmus Hall (Brooklyn, NY)	
50.	Dorian Thompson-Robinson	DUAL	6-1.5	195	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	
51.	Eyabi Anoma	WDE	6-5	230	St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, MD)	
52.	Jacob Copeland	WR	6-0	192	Escambia (Pensacola, FL)	
53.	Austin Fontaine	DT	6-2	312	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	
54.	Josh Jobe	CB	6-1	180	Columbus (Miami, FL)	Miami
55.	Tyson Campbell	CB	6-2.5	180	American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	
56.	Brenton Cox	SDE	6-4.5	247	Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA)	
57.	Max Wray	OT	6-6.5	289	Franklin (Franklin, TN)	Ohio State
58.	Olaijah Griffin	CB	6-0	170	Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA)	
59.	Solomon Tuliaupupu	ILB	6-3	230	Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA)	
60.	Zack Kuntz	TE	6-7.5	218	Camp Hill (Camp Hill, PA)	Penn State
61.	Nicholas Petit-Frere	OT	6-6	260	Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)	
62.	PJ Mustipher	DT	6-5	290	McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD)	
63.	Isheem Young	S	5-11	201	Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA)	
64.	Richard Gouraige	OT	6-5	271	Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL)	
65.	Brian Snead	RB	5-11	200	Armwood (Seffner, FL)	Ohio State
66.	Brian Hightower	WR	6-2.5	202	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Miami
67.	Rick Sandidge	DT	6-5	273	Concord (Concord, NC)	
68.	Marquis Spiker	WR	6-3	188	Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA)	Washington
69.	Jeremy Ruckert	TE	6-5.5	230	Lindenhurst (Lindenhurst, NY)	
70.	Jahan Dotson	WR	6-0	160	The Peddie School (Hightstown, NJ)	
71.	Artur Sitkowski	PRO	6-5	215	IMG Academy (Old Bridge, NJ)	Miami
72.	Derion Kendrick	WR	6-1	195	South Pointe (Rock Hill, SC)	Clemson
73.	Raymond Scott	OLB	6-2	220	Narbonne (Harbor City, CA)	USC
74.	William Barnes	OT	6-4	312	Apopka (Apopka, FL)	
75.	Michael Thompson	DT	6-3.5	291	Parkway North (Saint Louis, MO)	
76.	Al'vonte Woodard	WR	6-1	193	Lamar (Houston, TX)	
77.	Xavier Williams	WR	6-0.5	190	Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL)	Alabama
78.	Robert Cooper	DT	6-1	377	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	Florida State
79.	Brevin Jordan	TE	6-3	257	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	Miami
80.	Justin Shorter	WR	6-4	220	South Brunswick (Monmouth Junction, NJ)	Penn State
81.	Joshua Moore	WR	6-1	170	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	
82.	Al Blades Jr.	CB	6-0	170	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	
83.	Stephon Wynn	SDE	6-4	260	IMG Academy (Anderson, SC)	
84.	Justin Mascoll	WDE	6-4	237	South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA)	Clemson
85.	Payton Wilson	OLB	6-4	220	Orange (Hillsborough, NC)	
86.	Josh Proctor	S	6-2	190	Owasso (Owasso, OK)	Ohio State
87.	Mustapha Muhammad	TE	6-4	235	Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX)	
88.	Devonta Jason	WR	6-2.5	211	Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA)	Kansas
89.	Dylan Wonnum	OT	6-5	279	Tucker (Tucker, GA)	
90.	Mark Pope	WR	6-1	175	Miami Southridge (Hialeah, FL)	Miami
91.	Joey Gatewood	ATH	6-4	232	Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL)	Auburn
92.	Leon O'Neal Jr.	S	6-1	190	Cy Springs (Cypress, TX)	
93.	CJ Moore	WR	6-5	175	Union (Tulsa, OK)	
94.	Penei Sewell	OT	6-4	319	Desert HIlls (Saint George, UT)	
95.	Jalyn Armour-Davis	CB	6-0	160	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL)	
96.	Marquan McCall	OG	6-3	280	Oak Park (Oak Park, MI)	
97.	Jack West	PRO	6-4	217	Saraland (Saraland, AL)	Stanford
98.	Steve Stephens	S	6-0	185	Edison (Fresno, CA)	
99.	Dax Hollifield	ILB	6-1	220	Shelby (Shelby, NC)	
100.	Emil Ekiyor	OG	6-2	322	Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN)	Michigan

TOP 5 PLAYERS

BY POSITION

QUARTERBACK					
15. Davis Mills	PRO	6-3	192	Greater Atlanta Christian School (Norcross, GA)	Stanford
30. Hunter Johnson	PRO	6-2	201	Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN)	Clemson
32. Tua Tagovailoa	DUAL	6-1	212	St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)	Alabama
47. Jake Fromm	PRO	6-1	219	Houston County (Warner Robins, GA)	Georgia
57. Tate Martell	DUAL	5-10.5	203	Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV)	Ohio State
RUNNING BACK					
2. Cam Akers	RB	5-11	213	Clinton (Clinton, MS)	Florida State
3. Najee Harris	RB	6-2	227	Antioch (Antioch, CA)	Alabama
20. Stephen Carr	RB	6-0	202	Summit (Fontana, CA)	USC
28. Khalan Laborn	APB	5-10	199	Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)	Florida State
33. D'Andre Swift	RB	5-9	222	St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA)	Georgia
WIDE RECEIVER					
12. Donovan Peoples-Jones	WR	6-2	193	Cass Technical (Detroit, MI)	Michigan
19. Tee Higgins	WR	6-4.5	188	Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN)	Clemson
21. Jerry Jeudy	WR	6-1	177	Deerfield Beach (Pompano Beach, FL)	Alabama
31. Joseph Lewis	WR	6-1.5	204	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	USC
39. Trevon Grimes	WR	6-3	202	St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	Ohio State
TIGHT END					
36. Colby Parkinson	TE	6-7	228	Oaks Christian (Thousand Oaks, CA)	Stanford
67. Brock Wright	TE	6-4.5	243	Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX)	Notre Dame
84. Cole Kmet	TE	6-5	230	St. Viator (Arlington Heights, IL)	Notre Dame
140. Josh Falo	TE	6-5	235	Inderkum (Sacramento, CA)	USC
164. Hunter Bryant	TE	6-2.5	238	Eastside Catholic (Bellevue, WA)	Washington
OFFENSIVE LINE					
4. Alex Leatherwood	OT	6-6	327	Washington (Pensacola, FL)	Alabama
5. Foster Sarell	OT	6-6.5	311	Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA)	Stanford
10. Walker Little	OT	6-7	315	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	Stanford
14. Trey Smith	OT	6-5	313	University School Of Jackson (Jackson, TN)	Tennessee
16. Isaiah Wilson	OT	6-7	350	Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY)	Georgia
DEFENSIVE TACKLE					
6. Marvin Wilson	DT	6-4	329	Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)	Florida State
25. Aubrey Solomon	DT	6-3.25	288	Lee County (Leesburg, GA)	Michigan
41. Jay Tufele	DT	6-3	297	Bingham (South Jordan, UT)	USC
52. Tyler Shelvin	DT	6-2	380	Notre Dame (Lafayette, LA)	LSU
60. Marlon Tuipulotu	DT	6-2	295	Central (Independence, OR)	USC
DEFENSIVE END					
1. Jaelan Phillips	WDE	6-5.5	253	Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA)	UCLA
8. Chase Young	WDE	6-5	251	DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD)	Ohio State
9. Joshua Kaindoh	WDE	6-6	250	IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)	Florida State
26. LaBryan Ray	SDE	6-4	260	James Clemens (Madison, AL)	Alabama
29. A.J. Epenesa	SDE	6-5	260	Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)	Iowa
LINEBACKER					
10. Ben Davis	ILB	6-3	235	Gordo Sch (Gordo, AL)	Alabama
11. Mique Juarez	OLB	6-1.5	231	North High School (Torrance, CA)	UCLA
15. Lyndell Wilson	OLB	6-2	231	Carver (Montgomery, AL)	Alabama
25. Caleb Kelly	OLB	6-3.25	215	Clovis West (Fresno, CA)	Oklahoma
57. Tre Lamar	ILB	6-4	240	Roswell (Roswell, GA)	Clemson
DEFENSIVE BACK					
7. Jeffrey Okudah	CB	6-1.5	190	South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX)	Ohio State
17. Shaun Wade	CB	6-1	177	Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL)	Ohio State
18. JaCoby Stevens	S	6-2	214	Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN)	LSU
22. Richard LeCounte III	S	5-10.5	174	Liberty County (Riceboro, GA)	Georgia
23. Darnay Holmes	CB	5-10	190	Calabasas (Calabasas, CA)	UCLA
ATHLETE					
102. Greg Johnson	ATH	5-10	185	Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA)	USC
110. Salvon Ahmed	ATH	6-0	185	Juanita (Kirkland, WA)	Washington
126. Brendon White	ATH	6-1.5	200	Olentangy Liberty (Powell, OH)	Ohio State
157. Lynn Bowden	ATH	6-1	190	Warren G Harding (Youngstown, OH)	Kentucky
173. Connor Wedington	ATH	6-0	189	Sumner Senior (Sumner, WA)	Stanford

TOP 5 SCHOOLS

BY POSITION

QUARTERBACK

1. Alabama
- Tua Tagovailoa, 6-1/212, Honolulu (Hawaii) St. Louis
- Mac Jones, 6-2/185, Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School

2. Clemson
- Hunter Johnson, 6-2/201, Brownsburg (Ind.) High
- Chase Brice, 6-2/207, Loganville (Ga.) Grayson

3. Stanford
- Davis Mills, 6-3/192, Norcross (Ga.) Greater Atlanta Christian

4. Georgia
- Jake Fromm, 6-1/229, Warner Robins (Ga.) Houston County

5. LSU
- Myles Brennan, 6-4/177, Bay Saint Louis (Miss.) St Stanislaus
- Lowell Narcisse, 6-2/237, St. James (La.) High

RUNNING BACK

1. Florida State
- Cam Akers, 5-11/213, Clinton (Miss.) High
- Khalan Laborn, 5-10/199, Virginia Beach (Va.) Bishop Sullivan Catholic
- Zaquandre White, 6-0/210, North Fort Myers (Fla.) High
- Deonte Sheffield, 5-9.5/198, Niceville (Fla.) High

2. Alabama
- Najee Harris, 6-2/227, Antioch (Calif.) High
- Brian Robinson, 6-1/218, Tuscaloosa (Ala.) Hillcrest

3. Tennessee
- Ty Chandler, 5-10.5/187, Nashville (Tenn.) Montgomery Bell Acad.
- Trey Coleman, 5-11/203, West Monroe (La.) High
- Timothy Jordan, 5-11/189, Bartow (Fla.) High

4. Maryland
- Anthony McFarland Jr., 5-9/203, Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic
- Javon Leake, 6-1/195, Greensboro (N.C.) Page
- Tayon Fleet-Davis, 6-0/211, Oxon Hill (Md.) Potomac

5. Oklahoma
- Trey Sermon, 6-0.5/215, Marietta (Ga.) Sprayberry
- Kennedy Brooks, 6-0/197, Mansfield (Texas) High

WIDE RECEIVER

1. Alabama
- Jerry Jeudy, 6-1/177, Deerfield Beach (Fla.) High
- Devonta Smith, 6-1/165, Amite (La.) High
- Henry Ruggs III, 6-0/175, Montgomery (Ala.) Robert E. Lee
- Tyrell Shavers, 6-6/209, Lewisville (Texas) High

2. Michigan
- Donovan Peoples-Jones, 6-2/193, Detroit (Mich.) Cass Tech
- Tarik Black, 6-4/208, Cheshire (Conn.) Cheshire Academy
- Oliver Martin, 6-0.5/188, Iowa City (Iowa) West
- Brad Hawkins, 6-1/202, Suffield (Conn.) Suffield Academy

3. Oklahoma
- CeeDee Lamb, 6-2.5/172, Richmond (Texas) Foster

Charleston Rambo, 6-2/170, Cedar Hill (Texas) High
Marquise Brown, 5-11/170, Valencia (Calif.) College of the Canyons

4. Georgia

Jeremiah Holloman, 6-2/195, Covington (Ga.) Newton
Mark Webb, 6-2/195, Warminster (Ga.) Archbishop Wood
Trey Blount, 6-2/185, Atlanta (Ga.) Pace Academy
Matt Landers, 6-5/182, St. Petersburg (Fla.) High

5. Miami

Jeff Thomas, 5-10/175, East St. Louis (Ill.) High
Mike Harley, 5-9/155, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas
Evidence Njoku, 6-5/200, Wayne (N.J.) Wayne Hills
Derrick Smith, 6-3/190, Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy

TIGHT END

1. Notre Dame

Brock Wright, 6-4.5/243, Cypress (Texas) Cy-Fair
Cole Kmet, 6-5/230, Arlington Heights (Ill.) St. Viator

2. Stanford

Colby Parkinson, 6-7/228, Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian
Tucker Fisk, 6-3.5/255, Davis (Calif.) High

3. USC

Josh Falo, 6-5/235, Sacramento (Calif.) Inderkum
Erik Krommenhoek, 6-5.5/243, Danville (Calif.) Monte Vista

4. FSU

Tre' McKitty, 6-4/235, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Alexander Marshall, 6-7/240, Bridgton (Maine) Bridgton Academy

5. Washington

Hunter Bryant, 6-2.5/238, Bellevue (Wash.) Eastside Catholic
Cade Otton, 6-5/223, Olympia (Wash.) Tumwater

OFFENSIVE LINE

1. Georgia

Isaiah Wilson, 6-7/350, Brooklyn (N.Y.) Poly Prep
Andrew Thomas, 6-5/335, Atlanta (Ga.) Pace Academy
Netori Johnson, 6-3.5/341, Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove
D'Antne Demery, 6-5.5/319, Brunswick (Ga.) High
Justin Shaffer, 6-5/356, Ellenwood (Ga.) Cedar Grove
D'Marcus Hayes, 6-6/320, Perkinston (Miss.) Miss. Gulf Coast C.C.

2. Alabama

Alex Leatherwood, 6-6/327, Pensacola (Fla.) Washington
Jedrick Wills, 6-5/318, Lexington (Ky.) Lafayette
Elliot Baker, 6-7/300, San Francisco (Calif.) City Coll. of San Francisco
Kendall Randolph, 6-4/310, Madison (Ala.) Bob Jones
Hunter Brannon, 6-4/290, Cullman (Ala.) High

3. Stanford

Foster Sarell, 6-6.5/311, Graham (Wash.) Graham-Kapowsin
Walker Little, 6-7/315, Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal
Drew Dalman, 6-3/265, Salinas (Calif.) Palma

4. USC

Austin Jackson, 6-6/280, Phoenix (Ariz.) North Canyon
Alijah Vera-Tucker, 6-4/291, Oakland (Calif.) Bishop O'Dowd
Brett Neilon, 6-2/280, Rancho Santa Margarita (Calif.) Santa Margarita Cath.
Andrew Vorhees, 6-6/290, Kingsburg (Calif.) High
Jalen McKenzie, 6-4.5/307, Concord (Calif.) Clayton Valley

5. Ohio State

Wyatt Davis, 6-5/310, Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco
Josh Myers, 6-6/306, Miamisburg (Ohio) High
Thayer Munford, 6-5.5/320, Massillon (Ohio) Washington

DEFENSIVE LINE

1. USC

Jay Tufele, 6-3/297, South Jordan (Utah) Bingham
Marlon Tuipulotu, 6-2/295, Independence (Ore.) Central
Hunter Echols, 6-3.5/231, Los Angeles (Calif.) Cathedral
Brandon Pili, 6-4/310, Portland (Ore.) Westview
Jacob Lichtenstein, 6-5/248, Forth Lauderdale (Fla.) Cypress Bay

2. Florida State

Marvin Wilson, 6-4/329, Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal
Joshua Kaindoh, 6-6/250, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Ja'len Parks, 6-3/288, Newberry (Fla.) High
Cory Durden, 6-4/316, Newberry (Fla.) High
Tre Lawson, 6-6/240, North Augusta (S.C.) High

3. Michigan

Aubrey Solomon, 6-3.5/288, Leesburg (Ga.) Lee County
Luiji Vilain, 6-4/242, Alexandria (Va.) Episcopal
James Hudson, 6-5/290, Toledo (Ohio) Central Catholic
Deron Irving-Bey, 6-5/282, Flint (Mich.) SW Commencement Acad.
Donovan Jeter, 6-5/250, Beaver Falls (Pa.) High
Corey Malone-Hatcher, 6-3/246, St. Joseph (Mich.) High
Philip Paea, 6-4/285, Berrien Springs (Mich.) High
Kwitty Paye, 6-4/235, Warwick (R.I.) Bishop Hendrickson

4. UCLA

Jaelan Phillips, 6-5.5/253, Redlands (Calif.) Redlands East Valley
Greg Rogers, 6-3/305, Las Vegas (Nev.) Arbor View
Martin Andrus, 6-1/280, Los Angeles (Calif.) Senior
Odua Isibor, 6-4/220, Phoenix (Ariz.) St. Mary's

5. Ohio State

Chase Young, 6-5/251, Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic
Haskell Garett, 6-2/288, Las Vegas (Nev.) Bishop Gorman
Jerron Cage, 6-1.5/275, Cincinnati (Ohio) Winton Woods

LINEBACKER

1. Alabama

Dylan Moses, 6-3/234, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
VanDarius Cowan, 6-4/226, Palm Beach Gardens (Fla.) High
Markail Benton, 6-1.5/237, Phenix City (Ala.) Central
Christopher Allen, 6-4/234, Baton Rouge (La.) Southern University Lab

2. LSU

Jacob Phillips, 6-3/226, Nashville (Tenn.) East
Tyler Taylor, 6-1/235, Buford (Ga.) Lanier
Patrick Queen, 6-1/218, Livonia (La.) High

3. Michigan

Drew Singleton, 6-2/215, Paramus (N.J.) Paramus Catholic
Jordan Anthony, 6-0/220, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Josh Ross, 6-1.5/221, West Boomfield (Mich.) St. Mary's
Ben Mason, 6-2.5/247, Sandy Hook (Conn.) Newtown

4. Ohio State

Baron Browning, 6-2/229, Kennedale (Texas) High
Pete Werner, 6-3/220, Indianapolis (Ind.) Cathedral

5. Georgia

Jaden Hunter, 6-2/212, Atlanta (Ga.) Westlake
Nate McBride, 6-1.5/223, Vidalia (Ga.) Vidalia Comprehensive
Walter Grant, 6-4/236, Cairo (Ga.) High
Monty Rice, 6-1/227, Madison (Ala.) James Clemens

DEFENSIVE BACK

1. Ohio State

Jeffrey Okudah, 6-1.5/190, Grand Prairie (Texas) South Grand Prairie
Shaun Wade, 6-1/177, Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy
Isaiah Pryor, 6-1.5/195, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Kendall Sheffield, 6-0/185, Brenham (Texas) Blinn College
Amir Riep, 5-11/185, Cincinnati (Ohio) Colerain
Marcus Williamson, 5-9/180, Bradenton (Calif.) IMG Academy

2. LSU

JaCoby Stevens, 6-2/214, Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Oakland
Grant Delpit, 6-3/191, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Todd Harris, 5-11/180, Plaquemine (La.) High
Kary Vincent, 5-10/178, Port Arthur (Texas) Memorial

3. Florida

Christopher Henderson, 6-1/175, Miami (Fla.) Columbus
Brad Stewart, New Orleans (La.) McDonogh 35
Marco Wilson, 6-0/180, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage
Shawn Davis, 5-11/190, Miami (Fla.) Southridge
Brian Edwards, 6-3/195, Hollywood (Fla.) Miramar
Donovan Stiner, 6-2/185, Bellaire (Texas) High

4. Georgia

Richard LeCounte III, 5-10.5/174, Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County
Deangelo Gibbs, 6-2/204, Loganville (Ga.) Grayson
Tray Bishop, 6-2/200, Dawson (Ga.) Terrell Coutny
William Poole III, 5-11.5/180, Atlanta (Ga.) Hapeville Charter
Latavious Brini, 6-2/200, Hialeah (Fla.) Mater Academy Charter

5. Florida State

Stanford Samuels, 6-2/175, Hollywood (Fla.) Charles W Fanagan
Cyrus Fagan, 6-2/182, Daytona Beach (Fla.) Mainland
Hamsah Nasirildeen, 6-3/210, Concord (N.C.) High
Ontaria Wilson, 6-0/160, Ashburn (Ga.) Turner County

ATHLETE

1. Kentucky

Lynn Bowden, 6-1/190, Warren G Harding
Tyrell Ajian, 6-0/190, Mansfield (Ohio) Madison
Joshua Ali, 6-0/180, Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep

2. Virginia Tech

Tyjuan Garbutt, 6-3/215, Fredericksburg (Va.) Riverbend
Caleb Farley, 6-3/180, Maiden (N.C.) High
Dalton Keene, Littleton (Colo.) Chatfield

3. Auburn

Malcolm Askew, 5-11/185, McCalla (Ala.) McAdory
Alaric Williams, 6-0/195, Gadsden (Ala.) Southside
Malik Willis, 6-2/188, Roswell (Ga.) High
JaTarvious Whitlow, 6-0/205, Lafayette (Ala.) High

4. USC

Greg Johnson, 5-10/185, Los Angeles (Calif.) Hawkins
Randal Grimes, 6-4/205, Las Vegas (Nev.) Desert Pines
Tayler Katoa, 6-2/222, Layton (Utah) High

5. Oregon

Cyrus Habibi-Likio, 6-1/211, Mountain View (Calif.) St. Francis
Bruce Judson, 5-9/203, Cocoa (Fla.) High
Nick Pickett, 6-2/185, Los Angeles (Calif.) Salesian
Demetri Burch, 5-11.5/181, Apopka (Fla.) High
Darrian McNeal, 5-9/160, Seffner (Fla.) Armwood

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

AAC

EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 2 JAMES MADISON
Sept. 9 at West Virginia
Sept. 16 VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 30 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 7 TEMPLE
Oct. 14 at UCF
Oct. 21 BYU
Oct. 28 at Houston
Nov. 4 at Connecticut
Nov. 11 TULANE
Nov. 18 CINCINNATI
Nov. 25 at Memphis

CENTRAL FLORIDA (UCF)
Sept. 2 FIU
Sept. 9 MEMPHIS
Sept. 16 GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 23 at Maryland
Sept. 30 MAINE
Oct. 7 at Cincinnati
Oct. 14 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 21 at Navy
Nov. 4 at SMU
Nov. 11 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 18 at Temple
Nov. 24 SOUTH FLORIDA

CINCINNATI
Aug. 31 AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 9 at Michigan
Sept. 16 at Miami (OH)
Sept. 23 at Navy
Sept. 30 MARSHALL
Oct. 7 UCF
Oct. 21 SMU
Oct. 28 at South Florida
Nov. 4 at Tulane
Nov. 10 TEMPLE
Nov. 18 at East Carolina
Nov. 25 CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT
Aug. 31 HOLY CROSS
Sept. 9 SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 16 at Virginia
Sept. 30 at SMU
Oct. 6 MEMPHIS
Oct. 14 at Temple
Oct. 21 TULSA
Oct. 28 MISSOURI
Nov. 4 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 11 at UCF
Nov. 18 vs. Boston College (Fenway Park)
Nov. 25 at Cincinnati

HOUSTON
Sept. 2 at UTSA
Sept. 9 at Arizona
Sept. 16 RICE
Sept. 23 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 30 at Temple
Oct. 7 SMU
Oct. 14 at Tulsa
Oct. 19 MEMPHIS
Oct. 28 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 4 at South Florida
Nov. 18 at Tulane
Nov. 24 NAVY

MEMPHIS
Aug. 31 ULM
Sept. 9 at UCF
Sept. 16 UCLA
Sept. 23 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 30 at Georgia State
Oct. 6 at Connecticut
Oct. 14 NAVY
Oct. 19 at Houston
Oct. 27 TULANE
Nov. 3 at Tulsa
Nov. 18 SMU
Nov. 25 EAST CAROLINA

NAVY
Sept. 2 at FAU
Sept. 9 TULANE
Sept. 23 CINCINNATI
Sept. 30 at Tulsa
Oct. 7 AIR FORCE
Oct. 14 at Memphis
Oct. 21 UCF
Nov. 3 at Temple
Nov. 11 SMU
Nov. 18 at Notre Dame
Nov. 24 at Houston
Dec. 9 vs. Army West Point (Philadelphia, PA)

SMU
Sept. 2 STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 9 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 16 at TCU
Sept. 23 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 30 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 7 at Houston
Oct. 21 at Cincinnati
Oct. 27 TULSA
Nov. 4 UCF
Nov. 11 at Navy
Nov. 18 at Memphis
Nov. 25 TULANE

SOUTH FLORIDA
Aug. 26 at San Jose State
Sept. 2 STONY BROOK
Sept. 9 at Connecticut
Sept. 15 ILLINOIS
Sept. 21 TEMPLE
Sept. 30 at East Carolina
Oct. 14 MASSACHUSETS
Oct. 21 at Tulane
Oct. 28 CINCINNATI
Nov. 4 HOUSTON
Nov. 18 TULSA
Nov. 24 at UCF

TEMPLE
Sept. 2 at Notre Dame
Sept. 9 VILLANOVA
Sept. 15 MASSACHUSETS
Sept. 21 at South Florida
Sept. 30 HOUSTON
Oct. 7 at East Carolina
Oct. 14 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 21 at Army
Nov. 2 NAVY
Nov. 10 at Cincinnati
Nov. 18 UCF
Nov. 25 at Tulsa

TULANE
Sept. 2 GRAMBLING STATE
Sept. 9 at Navy
Sept. 16 at Oklahoma
Sept. 23 ARMY WEST POINT
Oct. 7 TULSA
Oct. 14 at FIU
Oct. 21 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 27 at Memphis
Nov. 4 CINCINNATI
Nov. 11 at East Carolina
Nov. 18 HOUSTON
Nov. 25 at SMU

TULSA
Sept. 2 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 9 LOUISIANA
Sept. 16 at Toledo
Sept. 23 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 30 NAVY
Oct. 7 at Tulane
Oct. 14 HOUSTON
Oct. 21 at Connecticut
Oct. 27 at SMU
Nov. 3 MEMPHIS
Nov. 18 at South Florida
Nov. 25 TEMPLE

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 1 at Northern Illinois
Sept. 9 WAKE FOREST
Sept. 16 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 23 at Clemson
Sept. 30 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 7 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 14 at Louisville
Oct. 21 at Virginia
Oct. 27 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 11 NC STATE
Nov. 18 vs. Connecticut (Fenway Park)
Nov. 25 at Syracuse

CLEMSON
Sept. 2 KENT STATE
Sept. 9 AUBURN
Sept. 16 at Louisville
Sept. 23 BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 30 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 7 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 13 at Syracuse
Oct. 28 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 4 at NC State
Nov. 11 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 18 THE CITADEL
Nov. 25 at South Carolina

DUKE
Sept. 2 N.C. CENTRAL
Sept. 9 NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 16 BAYLOR
Sept. 23 at North Carolina
Sept. 29 MIAMI
Oct. 7 at Virginia
Oct. 14 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 21 PITT
Oct. 28 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 11 at Army West Point
Nov. 18 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 25 at Wake Forest

FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 2 vs. Alabama (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 9 ULM
Sept. 16 MIAMI
Sept. 23 NC STATE
Sept. 30 at Wake Forest
Oct. 14 at Duke
Oct. 21 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 27 at Boston College
Nov. 4 SYRACUSE
Nov. 11 at Clemson
Nov. 18 DELAWARE STATE
Nov. 25 at Florida

GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 4 vs. Tennessee (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 9 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 16 at UCF
Sept. 23 PITTSBURGH
Sept. 30 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 12 at Miami
Oct. 21 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 28 at Clemson
Nov. 4 at Virginia
Nov. 11 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 18 at Duke
Nov. 25 GEORGIA

LOUISVILLE
Sept. 2 vs. Purdue (Indianapolis, IN)
Sept. 9 at North Carolina
Sept. 16 CLEMSON
Sept. 23 KENT STATE
Sept. 30 MURRAY STATE
Oct. 5 at NC State
Oct. 14 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 21 at Florida State
Oct. 28 at Wake Forest
Nov. 11 VIRGINIA
Nov. 18 SYRACUSE
Nov. 25 at Kentucky

MIAMI
Sept. 2 BETHUNE-COOKMAN
Sept. 9 at Arkansas State
Sept. 16 at Florida State
Sept. 23 TOLEDO
Sept. 29 at Duke
Oct. 12 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 21 SYRACUSE
Oct. 28 at North Carolina
Nov. 4 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 11 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 18 VIRGINIA
Nov. 24 at Pittsburgh

NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 2 CALIFORNIA
Sept. 9 LOUISVILLE
Sept. 16 at Old Dominion
Sept. 23 DUKE
Sept. 30 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 7 NOTRE DAME
Oct. 14 VIRGINIA
Oct. 21 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 28 MIAMI
Nov. 9 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 18 WESTERN CAROLINA
Nov. 25 at NC State

NC STATE
Sept. 2 vs. South Carolina (Charlotte, NC)
Sept. 9 MARSHALL
Sept. 16 FURMAN
Sept. 23 at Florida State
Sept. 30 SYRACUSE
Oct. 5 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 14 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 28 at Notre Dame
Nov. 4 CLEMSON
Nov. 11 at Boston College
Nov. 18 at Wake Forest
Nov. 25 UNC-CHAPEL HILL

PITTSBURGH
Sept. 2 YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 9 at Penn State
Sept. 16 OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 23 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 30 RICE
Oct. 7 at Syracuse
Oct. 14 NC STATE
Oct. 21 at Duke
Oct. 28 VIRGINIA
Nov. 9 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 18 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 24 MIAMI

SYRACUSE
Sept. 1 CENTRAL CONNECTICUT ST.
Sept. 9 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 16 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 23 at LSU
Sept. 30 at NC State
Oct. 7 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 13 CLEMSON
Oct. 21 at Miami
Nov. 4 at Florida State
Nov. 11 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 18 at Louisville
Nov. 25 BOSTON COLLEGE

VIRGINIA
Sept. 2 WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 9 INDIANA
Sept. 16 CONNETICUT
Sept. 22 at Boise State
Oct. 7 DUKE
Oct. 14 at North Carolina
Oct. 21 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 28 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 4 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 11 at Louisville
Nov. 18 at Miami
Nov. 24 VIRGINIA TECH

VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 2 vs. West Virginia (Landover, MD)
Sept. 9 DELAWARE
Sept. 16 at East Carolina
Sept. 23 OLD DOMINION
Sept. 30 CLEMSON
Oct. 7 at Boston College
Oct. 21 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 28 DUKE
Nov. 4 at Miami
Nov. 11 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 18 PITTSBURGH
Nov. 24 at Virginia

WAKE FOREST
Aug. 31 PRESBYTERIA
Sept. 9 at Boston College
Sept. 16 UTAH STATE
Sept. 23 at Appalachian State
Sept. 30 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 7 at Clemson
Oct. 21 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 28 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 4 at Notre Dame
Nov. 11 at Syracuse
Nov. 18 NC STATE
Nov. 25 DUKE

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS
Sept. 2 BALL STATE
Sept. 9 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 15 at South Florida
Sept. 29 NEBRASKA
Oct. 7 at Iowa
Oct. 14 RUTGERS
Oct. 21 at Minnesota
Oct. 28 WISCONSIN
Nov. 4 at Purdue
Nov. 11 INDIANA
Nov. 18 at Ohio State
Nov. 25 NORTHWESTERN

INDIANA
Aug. 31 OHIO STATE
Sept. 9 at Virginia
Sept. 16 FIU
Sept. 23 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Sept. 30 at Penn State
Oct. 14 MICHIGAN
Oct. 21 at Michigan State
Oct. 28 at Maryland
Nov. 4 WISCONSIN
Nov. 11 at Illinois
Nov. 18 RUTGERS
Nov. 25 at Purdue

IOWA
Sept. 9 at Iowa State
Sept. 16 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 23 PENN STATE
Sept. 30 at Michigan State
Oct. 7 ILLINOIS
Oct. 21 at Northwestern
Oct. 28 MINNESOTA
Nov. 4 OHIO STATE
Nov. 11 at Wisconsin
Nov. 18 PURDUE
Nov. 24 at Nebraska

MARYLAND
Sept. 2 at Texas
Sept. 9 TOWSON
Sept. 23 UCF
Sept. 30 at Minnesota
Oct. 7 at Ohio State
Oct. 13 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 21 at Wisconsin
Oct. 28 INDIANA
Nov. 4 at Rutgers
Nov. 11 MICHIGAN
Nov. 18 at Michigan State
Nov. 25 PENN STATE

MICHIGAN
Sept. 2 vs. Florida (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 9 CINCINNATI
Sept. 16 AIR FORCE
Sept. 23 at Purdue
Oct. 7 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 14 at Indiana
Oct. 21 at Penn State
Oct. 28 RUTGERS
Nov. 4 MINNESOTA
Nov. 11 at Maryland
Nov. 18 at Wisconsin
Nov. 25 OHIO STATE

MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 2 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 9 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 23 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 30 IOWA
Oct. 7 at Michigan
Oct. 14 at Minnesota
Oct. 21 INDIANA
Oct. 27 at Northwestern
Nov. 4 PENN STATE
Nov. 11 at Ohio State
Nov. 18 MARYLAND
Nov. 25 at Rutgers

MINNESOTA
Aug. 31 BUFFALO
Sept. 9 at Oregon State
Sept. 16 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 30 MARYLAND
Oct. 7 at Purdue
Oct. 14 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 21 ILLINOIS
Oct. 28 at Iowa
Nov. 4 at Michigan
Nov. 11 NEBRASKA
Nov. 18 at Northwestern
Nov. 25 WISCONSIN

NEBRASKA
Sept. 2 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 9 at Oregon
Sept. 16 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 23 RUTGERS
Sept. 29 at Illinois
Oct. 7 WISCONSIN
Oct. 14 OHIO STATE
Oct. 28 at Purdue
Nov. 4 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 11 at Minnesota
Nov. 18 at Penn State
Nov. 24 IOWA

NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 2 NEVADA
Sept. 9 at Duke
Sept. 16 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 30 at Wisconsin
Oct. 7 PENN STATE
Oct. 13 at Maryland
Oct. 21 IOWA
Oct. 27 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 4 at Nebraska
Nov. 11 PURDUE
Nov. 18 MINNESOTA
Nov. 25 at Illinois

OHIO STATE
Aug. 31 at Indiana
Sept. 9 OKLAHOMA
Sept. 16 ARMY WEST POINT
Sept. 23 UNLV
Sept. 30 at Rutgers
Oct. 7 MARYLAND
Oct. 14 at Nebraska
Oct. 28 PENN STATE
Nov. 4 at Iowa
Nov. 11 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 18 ILLINOIS
Nov. 25 at Michigan

PENN STATE
Sept. 2 AKRON
Sept. 9 PITTSBURGH
Sept. 16 GEORGIA STATE
Sept. 23 at Iowa
Sept. 30 INDIANA
Oct. 7 at Northwestern
Oct. 21 MICHIGAN
Oct. 28 at Ohio State
Nov. 4 at Michigan State
Nov. 11 RUTGERS
Nov. 18 NEBRASKA
Nov. 25 at Maryland

PURDUE
Sept. 2 LOUISVILLE (Indianapolis, IN)
Sept. 8 OHIO
Sept. 16 at Missouri
Sept. 23 MICHIGAN
Oct. 7 MINNESOTA
Oct. 14 at Wisconsin
Oct. 21 at Rutgers
Oct. 28 NEBRASKA
Nov. 4 ILLINOIS
Nov. 11 at Northwestern
Nov. 18 at Iowa
Nov. 25 INDIANA

RUTGERS
Sept. 1 WASHINGTON
Sept. 9 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 16 MORGAN STATE
Sept. 23 at Nebraska
Sept. 30 OHIO STATE
Oct. 14 at Illinois
Oct. 21 PURDUE
Oct. 28 at Michigan
Nov. 4 vs. Maryland (Yankee Stadium)
Nov. 11 at Penn State
Nov. 18 at Indiana
Nov. 25 MICHIGAN STATE

WISCONSIN
Sept. 1 UTAH STATE
Sept. 9 FAU
Sept. 16 at BYU
Sept. 30 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 7 at Nebraska
Oct. 14 PURDUE
Oct. 21 MARYLAND
Oct. 28 at Illinois
Nov. 4 at Indiana
Nov. 11 IOWA
Nov. 18 MICHIGAN
Nov. 25 at Minnesota

BIG 12

BAYLOR
Sept. 2 LIBERTY
Sept. 9 UTSA
Sept. 16 at Duke
Sept. 23 OKLAHOMA
Sept. 30 at Kansas State
Oct. 14 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 21 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 28 TEXAS
Nov. 4 at Kansas
Nov. 11 vs. Texas Tech (Arlington, TX)
Nov. 18 IOWA STATE
Nov. 24 at TCU

IOWA STATE
Sept. 2 WYOMING
Sept. 9 at Iowa State
Sept. 16 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 23 PENN STATE
Sept. 30 at Michigan State
Oct. 7 ILLINOIS
Oct. 21 at Northwestern
Oct. 28 MINNESOTA
Nov. 4 OHIO STATE
Nov. 11 at Wisconsin
Nov. 18 PURDUE
Nov. 24 at Nebraska

KANSAS
Sept. 2 SOUTHEAST MISSOURI ST.
Sept. 9 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 16 at Ohio
Sept. 23 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 7 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 14 at Iowa State
Oct. 21 at TCU
Oct. 28 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 4 BAYLOR
Nov. 11 at Texas
Nov. 18 OKLAHOMA
Nov. 25 at Oklahoma State

KANSAS STATE
Sept. 2 CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 9 CHARLOTTE
Sept. 16 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 30 BAYLOR
Oct. 7 at Texas
Oct. 14 TCU
Oct. 21 OKLAHOMA

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

Oct. 28 at Kansas
Nov. 4 at Texas Tech
Nov. 11 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 18 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 25 IOWA STATE

OKLAHOMA

Sept. 2 UTEP
Sept. 9 at Ohio State
Sept. 16 TULANE
Sept. 23 at Baylor
Oct. 7 IOWA STATE
Oct. 14 vs. Texas (Dallas, TX)
Oct. 21 at Kansas State
Oct. 28 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 4 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 11 TCU
Nov. 18 at Kansas
Nov. 25 WEST VIRGINIA

OKLAHOMA STATE

Sept. 2 TULSA
Sept. 9 at South Alabama
Sept. 16 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 23 TCU
Sept. 30 at Texas Tech
Oct. 14 BAYLOR
Oct. 21 at Texas
Oct. 28 at West Virginia
Nov. 4 OKLAHOMA
Nov. 11 at Iowa State
Nov. 18 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 25 KANSAS

TCU

Sept. 2 JACKSON STATE
Sept. 9 at Arkansas
Sept. 16 SMU
Sept. 23 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 7 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 14 at Kansas State
Oct. 21 KANSAS
Oct. 28 at Iowa State
Nov. 4 TEXAS
Nov. 11 at Oklahoma
Nov. 18 at Texas Tech
Nov. 24 BAYLOR

TEXAS

Sept. 2 MARYLAND
Sept. 9 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 16 at USC
Sept. 28 at Iowa State
Oct. 7 KANSAS STATE
Oct. 14 vs. Oklahoma (Dallas, TX)
Oct. 21 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 28 at Baylor
Nov. 4 at TCU
Nov. 11 KANSAS
Nov. 18 at West Virginia
Nov. 24 TEXAS TECH

TEXAS TECH

Sept. 2 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 16 ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 23 at Houston
Sept. 30 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 7 at Kansas
Oct. 14 at West Virginia
Oct. 21 IOWA STATE
Oct. 28 at Oklahoma
Nov. 4 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 11 vs. Baylor (Arlington, TX)
Nov. 18 TCU
Nov. 25 at Texas

WEST VIRGINIA

Sept. 2 vs. Virginia Tech (Landover, MD)
Sept. 9 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 16 DELAWARE STATE
Sept. 23 at Kansas
Oct. 7 at TCU
Oct. 14 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 21 at Baylor
Oct. 28 OKLAHOMA STATE
Nov. 4 IOWA STATE
Nov. 11 at Kansas State
Nov. 18 TEXAS
Nov. 25 at Oklahoma

C-USA

CHARLOTTE

Sept. 1 at Eastern Michigan
Sept. 9 at Kansas State
Sept. 16 NORTH CAROLINA A&T
Sept. 23 GEORGIA STATE
Sept. 30 at FIU
Oct. 7 MARSHALL
Oct. 14 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 21 UAB
Nov. 4 at Old Dominion
Nov. 11 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 18 at Southern Miss
Nov. 25 FLORIDA ATLANTIC

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (FAU)

Sept. 2 NAVY
Sept. 9 at Wisconsin
Sept. 16 BETHUNE COOKMAN
Sept. 23 at Buffalo
Sept. 30 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 7 at Old Dominion
Oct. 21 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 28 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 3 MARSHALL
Nov. 11 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 18 FIU
Nov. 25 at Charlotte

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL (FIU)

Sept. 2 at UCF
Sept. 9 ALCORN STATE
Sept. 16 at Indiana
Sept. 23 at Rice
Sept. 30 CHARLOTTE
Oct. 7 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 14 TULANE
Oct. 28 at Marshall
Nov. 4 UTSA
Nov. 11 OLD DOMINION
Nov. 18 at FAU
Nov. 25 WESTERN KENTUCKY

LOUISIANA TECH

Sept. 2 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 9 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 16 at Western Kentucky
Sept. 23 at South Carolina
Sept. 30 SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 7 at UAB
Oct. 21 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 28 at Rice
Nov. 4 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 11 FAU
Nov. 18 at UTEP
Nov. 25 UTSA

MARSHALL

Sept. 2 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 9 at NC State
Sept. 16 KENT STATE
Sept. 30 at Cincinnati
Oct. 7 at Charlotte
Oct. 14 OLD DOMINION
Oct. 20 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 28 FIU
Nov. 3 at FAU
Nov. 11 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 18 at UTSA
Nov. 25 SOUTHERN MISS

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Sept. 2 VANDERBILT
Sept. 9 at Syracuse
Sept. 16 at Minnesota
Sept. 23 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 30 at FAU
Oct. 7 FIU
Oct. 14 at UAB
Oct. 20 MARSHALL
Nov. 4 UTSA
Nov. 11 at Charlotte
Nov. 17 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 25 OLD DOMINION

NORTH TEXAS

Sept. 2 LAMAR
Sept. 9 at SMU
Sept. 16 at Iowa
Sept. 23 UAB
Sept. 30 at Southern Miss
Oct. 14 UTSA
Oct. 21 at FAU
Oct. 28 OLD DOMINION
Nov. 4 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 11 UTEP
Nov. 18 ARMY
Nov. 25 at Rice

OLD DOMINION

Sept. 2 ALBANY
Sept. 9 at Massachusets
Sept. 16 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 23 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 7 FAU
Oct. 14 at Marshall
Oct. 20 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 28 at North Texas
Nov. 4 CHARLOTTE
Nov. 11 at FIU
Nov. 18 RICE
Nov. 25 at Middle Tennessee

RICE

Aug. 26 vs. Stanford (Sydney, Australia)
Sept. 9 at UTEP
Sept. 16 at Houston
Sept. 23 FIU
Sept. 30 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 7 ARMY WEST POINT
Oct. 21 at UTSA
Oct. 28 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 4 at UAB
Nov. 11 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 18 at Old Dominion
Nov. 25 NORTH TEXAS

SOUTHERN MISS

Sept. 2 KENTUCKY
Sept. 9 SOUTHERN
Sept. 16 at ULM
Sept. 30 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 7 at UTSA
Oct. 14 UTEP
Oct. 21 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 28 UAB
Nov. 4 at Tennessee
Nov. 11 at Rice
Nov. 18 CHARLOTTE
Nov. 25 at Marshall

UAB

Sept. 2 ALABAMA A&M
Sept. 9 at Ball State
Sept. 16 COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 23 at North Texas
Oct. 7 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 14 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 21 at Charlotte
Oct. 28 at Southern Miss
Nov. 4 RICE
Nov. 11 at UTSA
Nov. 18 at Florida
Nov. 25 UTEP

UTEP

Sept. 2 at Oklahoma
Sept. 9 RICE
Sept. 16 ARIZONA
Sept. 23 at New Mexico State
Sept. 30 at Army West Point
Oct. 7 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 14 at Southern Miss
Oct. 28 UTSA
Nov. 4 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 11 ATNORTH TEXAS
Nov. 18 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 25 at UAB

UTSA

Sept. 2 HOUSTON
Sept. 9 at Baylor
Sept. 16 SOUTHERN
Sept. 23 TEXAS STATE
Oct. 7 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 14 at North Texas
Oct. 21 RICE
Oct. 28 at UTEP
Nov. 4 at FIU
Nov. 11 UAB
Nov. 18 MARSHALL
Nov. 25 at Louisiana Tech

WESTERN KENTUCKY

Sept. 2 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 9 at Illinois
Sept. 16 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 23 BALL STATE
Oct. 7 at UTEP
Oct. 14 CHARLOTTE
Oct. 20 at Old Dominion
Oct. 28 FAU
Nov. 4 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 11 at Marshall
Nov. 17 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 25 at FIU

I-A INDEPENDENTS

ARMY WEST POINT

Sept. 1 FORDHAM
Sept. 9 BUFFALO
Sept. 16 at Ohio State
Sept. 23 at Tulane
Sept. 30 UTEP
Oct. 7 at Rice
Oct. 14 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 21 TEMPLE
Nov. 4 at Air Force
Nov. 11 DUKE
Nov. 18 at North Texas
Dec. 9 vs. Navy (Philadelphia, PA)

BYU

Sept. 2 vs. LSU (Houston, TX)
Sept. 9 UTAH
Sept. 16 WISCONSIN
Sept. 29 at Utah State
Oct. 6 BOISE STATE
Oct. 14 at Mississippi State
Oct. 21 at East Carolina
Oct. 28 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 4 at Fresno State
Nov. 11 at UNLV
Nov. 18 MASSACHUSETS
Nov. 25 at Hawaii

NOTRE DAME

Sept. 2 TEMPLE
Sept. 9 GEORGIA
Sept. 16 at Boston College
Sept. 23 at Michigan State
Sept. 30 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 7 at North Carolina
Oct. 21 USC
Oct. 28 NC STATE
Nov. 4 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 11 at Miami
Nov. 18 vs. Navy
Nov. 25 at Stanford

MASSACHUSETTS

Aug. 26 HAWAII
Sept. 2 at Coastal Carolina
Sept. 9 OLD DOMINION
Sept. 15 at Temple
Sept. 23 at Tennessee
Sept. 30 OHIO
Oct. 14 at South Florida
Oct. 21 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Oct. 28 APPALACHIAN STATE
Nov. 4 at Mississippi State
Nov. 11 vs. Maine (Fenway Park)
Nov. 18 at BYU

MAC

AKRON

Sept. 2 at Penn State
Sept. 9 ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF
Sept. 16 IOWA STATE
Sept. 23 at Troy
Sept. 30 at Bowling Green
Oct. 7 BALL STATE
Oct. 14 at Western Michigan
Oct. 21 at Toledo
Oct. 28 BUFFALO
Nov. 7 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 14 OHIO
Nov. 21 KENT STATE

BALL STATE

Sept. 2 at Illinois
Sept. 9 UAB
Sept. 16 TENNESSEE TECH
Sept. 23 at Western Kentucky
Sept. 30 at Western Michigan
Oct. 7 at Akron
Oct. 21 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 26 TOLEDO
Nov. 2 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 9 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 16 BUFFALO
Nov. 21 MIAMI

BOWLING GREEN

Sept. 2 at Michigan State
Sept. 9 SOUTH DAKOTA
Sept. 16 at Northwestern
Sept. 23 at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 30 AKRON
Oct. 7 at Miami (OH)
Oct. 14 OHIO
Oct. 21 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 31 at Kent State
Nov. 7 at Buffalo
Nov. 15 TOLEDO
Nov. 21 at Eastern Michigan

BUFFALO

Aug. 31 at Minnesota
Sept. 9 at Army West Point
Sept. 16 COLGATE
Sept. 23 FAU
Sept. 30 at Kent State
Oct. 7 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 14 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 21 at Miami (OH)
Oct. 28 at Akron
Nov. 7 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 16 at Ball State
Nov. 24 OHIO

CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Aug. 31 RHODE ISLAND
Sept. 9 at Kansas
Sept. 16 at Syracuse
Sept. 23 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 30 at Boston College
Oct. 7 at Ohio
Oct. 14 TOLEDO
Oct. 21 at Ball State
Nov. 1 at Western Michigan
Nov. 8 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 14 at Kent State
Nov. 24 NORTHERN ILLINOIS

EASTERN MICHIGAN

Sept. 1 CHARLOTTE
Sept. 9 at Rutgers
Sept. 23 OHIO
Sept. 30 at Kentucky
Oct. 7 at Toledo
Oct. 14 at Army West Point
Oct. 21 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 26 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 2 BALL STATE
Nov. 8 at Central Michigan
Nov. 15 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 21 BOWLING GREEN

KENT STATE

Sept. 2 at Clemson
Sept. 9 HOWARD
Sept. 16 at Marshall
Sept. 23 at Louisville
Sept. 30 BUFFALO
Oct. 7 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 14 MIAMI
Oct. 21 at Ohio
Oct. 31 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 8 at Western Michigan
Nov. 14 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 21 at Akron

MIAMI (OH)

Sept. 2 at Marshall
Sept. 9 AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 16 CINCINNATI
Sept. 23 at Central Michigan
Sept. 30 at Notre Dame
Oct. 7 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 14 at Kent State
Oct. 21 BUFFALO
Oct. 31 at Ohio
Nov. 7 AKRON
Nov. 15 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 21 at Ball State

NORTHERN ILLINOIS

Sept. 1 BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 9 EASTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 16 at Nebraska
Sept. 30 at San Diego State
Oct. 7 KENT STATE
Oct. 14 at Buffalo
Oct. 21 at Bowling Green
Oct. 26 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 2 at Toledo
Nov. 9 BALL STATE
Nov. 15 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 24 at Central Michigan

OHIO

Sept. 2 HAMPTON
Sept. 8 at Purdue
Sept. 16 KANSAS
Sept. 23 at Eastern Michigan
Sept. 30 at Massachusets
Oct. 7 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 14 at Bowling Green
Oct. 21 KENT STATE
Oct. 31 MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 8 TOLEDO
Nov. 14 at Akron
Nov. 24 at Buffalo

TOLEDO

Aug. 31 ELON
Sept. 9 at Nevada
Sept. 16 TULSA
Sept. 23 at Miami
Oct. 7 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 14 at Central Michigan
Oct. 21 AKRON
Oct. 26 at Ball State
Nov. 2 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 8 at Ohio
Nov. 15 at Bowling Green
Nov. 24 WESTERN MICHIGAN

WESTERN MICHIGAN

Sept. 2 at USC
Sept. 9 at Michigan State
Sept. 16 IDAHO
Sept. 23 WAGNER
Sept. 30 BALL STATE
Oct. 7 at Buffalo
Oct. 14 AKRON
Oct. 21 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 1 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 8 KENT STATE
Nov. 15 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 24 at Toledo

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE

Sept. 2 VMI
Sept. 16 at Michigan
Sept. 23 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 30 at New Mexico
Oct. 7 at Navy
Oct. 14 UNLV
Oct. 21 at Nevada
Oct. 28 at Colorado State
Nov. 4 ARMY WEST POINT
Nov. 11 WYOMING
Nov. 18 at Boise State
Nov. 25 UTAH STATE

BOISE STATE

Sept. 2 TROY
Sept. 9 at Washington State
Sept. 16 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 22 VIRGINIA
Oct. 6 at BYU
Oct. 14 at San Diego State
Oct. 21 WYOMING
Oct. 28 at Utah State
Nov. 4 NEVADA
Nov. 11 at Colorado State
Nov. 18 AIR FORCE
Nov. 25 at Fresno State

COLORADO STATE

Aug. 26 OREGON STATE
Sept. 1 COLORADO
Sept. 9 ABILENE CHRISTIAN
Sept. 16 at Alabama
Sept. 30 at Hawaii
Oct. 7 at Utah State
Oct. 14 NEVADA
Oct. 21 at New Mexico
Oct. 28 AIR FORCE
Nov. 4 at Wyoming
Nov. 11 BOISE STATE
Nov. 18 SAN JOSE STATE

FRESNO STATE

Sept. 2 INCARNATE WORD
Sept. 9 at Alabama
Sept. 16 at Washington
Sept. 30 NEVADA
Oct. 7 at San Jose State
Oct. 14 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 21 at San Diego State
Oct. 28 UNLV
Nov. 4 BYU
Nov. 11 at Hawaii
Nov. 18 at Wyoming
Nov. 25 BOISE STATE

HAWAII

Aug. 26 at Massachusetts
Sept. 2 WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 9 at UCLA
Sept. 23 at Wyoming
Sept. 30 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 7 at Nevada
Oct. 14 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 28 SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 4 at UNLV
Nov. 11 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 18 at Utah State
Nov. 25 BYU

NEVADA

Sept. 2 at Northwestern
Sept. 9 TOLEDO
Sept. 16 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 23 at Washington State
Sept. 30 at Fresno State
Oct. 7 HAWAII
Oct. 14 at Colorado State
Oct. 21 AIR FORCE
Nov. 4 at Boise State
Nov. 11 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 18 at San Diego State
Nov. 25 UNLV

NEW MEXICO

Sept. 2 ABILENE CHRISTIAN
Sept. 9 NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 16 at Boise State
Sept. 23 at Tulsa
Sept. 30 AIR FORCE
Oct. 14 at Fresno State
Oct. 21 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 28 at Wyoming
Nov. 4 UTAH STATE
Nov. 11 at Texas A&M
Nov. 18 UNLV
Nov. 25 at San Diego State

Wrangler NATIONAL SCHEDULES

SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 2 UC DAVIS
Sept. 9 at Arizona State
Sept. 16 STANFORD
Sept. 23 at Air Force
Sept. 30 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 7 at UNLV
Oct. 14 BOISE STATE
Oct. 21 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 28 at Hawaii
Nov. 4 at San Jose State
Nov. 18 NEVADA
Nov. 25 NEW MEXICO

SAN JOSE STATE
Aug. 26 SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 2 CAL POLY
Sept. 9 at Texas
Sept. 16 at Utah
Sept. 23 UTAH STATE
Sept. 30 at UNLV
Oct. 7 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 14 at Hawaii
Oct. 28 at BYU
Nov. 4 SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 11 at Nevada
Nov. 18 at Colorado State
Nov. 25 WYOMING

UNLV
Sept. 2 HOWARD
Sept. 9 at Idaho
Sept. 23 at Ohio State
Sept. 30 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 7 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 14 at Air Force
Oct. 21 UTAH STATE
Oct. 28 at Fresno State
Nov. 4 HAWAII
Nov. 11 BYU
Nov. 18 at New Mexico
Nov. 25 at Nevada

UTAH STATE
Sept. 1 at Wisconsin
Sept. 7 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 16 at Wake Forest
Sept. 23 at San Jose State
Sept. 29 BYU
Oct. 7 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 14 WYOMING
Oct. 21 at UNLV
Oct. 28 BOISE STATE
Nov. 4 at New Mexico
Nov. 18 HAWAII
Nov. 25 at Air Force

WYOMING
Sept. 2 at Iowa
Sept. 9 GARDNER-WEBB
Sept. 16 OREGON
Sept. 23 HAWAII
Sept. 30 TEXAS STATE
Oct. 14 at Utah State
Oct. 21 at Boise State
Oct. 28 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 4 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 11 at Air Force
Nov. 18 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 25 at San Jose State

PAC-12

ARIZONA
Sept. 2 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 9 HOUSTON
Sept. 16 at UTEP
Sept. 22 UTAH
Oct. 7 at Colorado
Oct. 14 UCLA
Oct. 21 at California
Oct. 28 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 4 at USC
Nov. 11 OREGON STATE
Nov. 18 at Oregon
Nov. 25 at Arizona State

ARIZONA STATE
Aug. 31 NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 9 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 16 at Texas Tech
Sept. 23 OREGON
Sept. 30 at Stanford
Oct. 14 WASHINGTON
Oct. 21 at Utah
Oct. 28 USC
Nov. 4 COLORADO
Nov. 11 at UCLA
Nov. 18 at Oregon State
Nov. 25 ARIZONA

CALIFORNIA
Sept. 2 at North Carolina
Sept. 9 WEBER STATE
Sept. 16 OLE MISS
Sept. 23 USC
Sept. 30 at Oregon
Oct. 7 at Washington
Oct. 13 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 21 ARIZONA
Oct. 28 at Colorado
Nov. 4 OREGON STATE
Nov. 18 at Stanford
Nov. 24 at UCLA

COLORADO
Sept. 1 vs. Colorado State (Denver, CO)
Sept. 9 TEXAS STATE
Sept. 16 NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 23 WASHINGTON
Sept. 30 at UCLA
Oct. 7 ARIZONA
Oct. 14 at Oregon State
Oct. 21 at Washington State
Oct. 28 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 4 at Arizona State
Nov. 11 USC
Nov. 25 at Utah

OREGON
Sept. 2 SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 9 NEBRASKA
Sept. 16 at Wyoming
Sept. 23 at Arizona State
Sept. 30 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 7 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 14 at Stanford
Oct. 21 at UCLA
Oct. 28 UTAH
Nov. 4 at Washington
Nov. 18 ARIZONA
Nov. 24 OREGON STATE

OREGON STATE
Aug. 26 at Colorado State
Sept. 2 PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 9 MINNESOTA
Sept. 16 at Washington State
Sept. 30 WASHINGTON
Oct. 7 at USC
Oct. 14 COLORADO
Oct. 26 STANFORD
Nov. 4 at California
Nov. 11 at Arizona
Nov. 18 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 24 at Oregon

STANFORD
Aug. 26 vs. Rice (Sydney, Australia)
Sept. 9 at USC
Sept. 16 at San Diego State
Sept. 23 UCLA
Sept. 30 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 7 at Utah
Oct. 14 OREGON
Oct. 26 at Oregon State
Nov. 4 at Washington State
Nov. 10 WASHINGTON
Nov. 18 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 25 NOTRE DAME

UCLA
Sept. 3 TEXAS A&M
Sept. 9 HAWAII
Sept. 16 at Memphis
Sept. 23 at Stanford
Sept. 30 COLORADO
Oct. 14 at Arizona
Oct. 21 OREGON
Oct. 28 at Washington
Nov. 3 at Utah
Nov. 11 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 18 at USC
Nov. 24 CALIFORNIA

USC
Sept. 2 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 9 STANFORD
Sept. 16 TEXAS
Sept. 23 at California
Sept. 29 at Washington State
Oct. 7 OREGON STATE
Oct. 14 UTAH
Oct. 21 at Notre Dame
Oct. 28 at Arizona State
Nov. 4 ARIZONA
Nov. 11 at Colorado
Nov. 18 UCLA

UTAH
Aug. 31 NORTH DAKOTA
Sept. 9 at BYU
Sept. 16 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 22 at Arizona
Oct. 7 STANFORD
Oct. 14 at USC
Oct. 21 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 28 at Oregon
Nov. 3 UCLA
Nov. 11 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 18 at Washington
Nov. 25 COLORADO

WASHINGTON
Sept. 1 at Rutgers
Sept. 9 MONTANA
Sept. 16 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 23 at Colorado
Sept. 30 at Oregon State
Oct. 7 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 14 at Arizona State
Oct. 28 UCLA
Nov. 4 OREGON
Nov. 10 at Stanford
Nov. 18 UTAH
Nov. 25 WASHINGTON STATE

WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 2 MONTANA STATE
Sept. 9 BOISE STATE
Sept. 16 OREGON STATE
Sept. 23 NEVADA
Sept. 29 USC
Oct. 7 at Oregon
Oct. 13 at California
Oct. 21 COLORADO
Oct. 28 at Arizona
Nov. 4 STANFORD
Nov. 11 at Utah
Nov. 25 at Washington

SEC

ALABAMA
Sept. 2 vs. Florida State (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 9 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 16 COLORADO STATE
Sept. 23 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 30 OLE MISS
Oct. 7 at Texas A&M
Oct. 14 ARKANSAS
Oct. 21 TENNESSEE
Nov. 4 LSU
Nov. 11 at Mississippi State
Nov. 18 MERCER
Nov. 25 at Auburn

ARKANSAS
Aug. 31 vs. Florida A&M (Little Rock, AR)
Sept. 9 TCU
Sept. 23 vs. Texas A&M (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 30 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 7 at South Carolina
Oct. 14 at Alabama
Oct. 21 AUBURN
Oct. 28 at Ole Miss
Nov. 4 COASTAL CAROLINA
Nov. 11 at LSU
Nov. 18 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 25 MISSOURI

AUBURN
Sept. 2 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Sept. 9 at Clemson
Sept. 16 MERCER
Sept. 23 at Missouri
Sept. 30 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 7 OLE MISS
Oct. 14 at LSU
Oct. 21 at Arkansas
Nov. 4 at Texas A&M
Nov. 11 GEORGIA
Nov. 18 ULM
Nov. 25 ALABAMA

FLORIDA
Sept. 2 vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 9 NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 16 TENNESSEE
Sept. 23 at Kentucky
Sept. 30 VANDERBILT
Oct. 7 LSU
Oct. 14 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 28 vs. Georgia (Jacksonville, FL)
Nov. 4 at Missouri
Nov. 11 at South Carolina
Nov. 18 UAB
Nov. 25 FLORIDA STATE

GEORGIA
Sept. 2 APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 9 at Notre Dame
Sept. 16 SAMFORD
Sept. 23 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 30 at Tennessee
Oct. 7 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 14 MISSOURI
Oct. 28 vs. Florida (Jacksonville, FL)
Nov. 4 SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 11 at Auburn
Nov. 18 KENTUCKY
Nov. 25 at Georgia Tech

KENTUCKY
Sept. 2 at Southern Miss
Sept. 9 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 16 at South Carolina
Sept. 23 FLORIDA
Sept. 30 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 7 MISSOURI
Oct. 21 at Mississippi State
Oct. 28 TENNESSEE
Nov. 4 OLE MISS
Nov. 11 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 18 at Georgia
Nov. 25 LOUISVILLE

LSU
Sept. 2 vs. BYU (Houston, TX)
Sept. 9 CHATTANOOGA
Sept. 16 at Mississippi State
Sept. 23 SYRACUSE
Sept. 30 TROY
Oct. 7 at Florida
Oct. 14 AUBURN
Oct. 21 at Ole Miss
Nov. 4 at Alabama
Nov. 11 ARKANSAS
Nov. 18 at Tennessee
Nov. 25 TEXAS A&M

OLE MISS
Sept. 2 SOUTH ALABAMA
Sept. 9 UT MARTIN
Sept. 16 at California
Sept. 30 at Alabama
Oct. 7 at Auburn
Oct. 14 VANDERBILT
Oct. 21 LSU
Oct. 28 ARKANSAS
Nov. 4 at Kentucky
Nov. 11 LOUISIANA
Nov. 18 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 23 at Mississippi State

MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 2 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 9 at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 16 LSU
Sept. 23 at Georgia
Sept. 30 at Auburn
Oct. 14 BYU
Oct. 21 KENTUCKY
Oct. 28 at Texas A&M
Nov. 4 MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 11 ALABAMA
Nov. 18 at Arkansas
Nov. 23 OLE MISS

MISSOURI
Sept. 2 MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 9 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 16 PURDUE
Sept. 23 AUBURN
Oct. 7 at Kentucky
Oct. 14 at Georgia
Oct. 21 IDAHO
Oct. 28 at Connecticut
Nov. 4 FLORIDA
Nov. 11 TENNESSEE
Nov. 18 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 25 at Arkansas

SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 2 vs. at NC State (Charlotte, NC)
Sept. 9 at Missouri
Sept. 16 KENTUCKY
Sept. 23 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 30 at Texas A&M
Oct. 7 ARKANSAS
Oct. 14 at Tennessee
Oct. 28 VANDERBILT
Nov. 4 at Georgia
Nov. 11 FLORIDA
Nov. 18 WOFFORD
Nov. 25 CLEMSON

TENNESSEE
Sept. 4 vs. Georgia Tech (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 9 INDIANA STATE
Sept. 16 at Florida
Sept. 23 MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 30 GEORGIA
Oct. 14 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 21 at Alabama
Oct. 28 at Kentucky
Nov. 4 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 11 at Missouri
Nov. 18 LSU
Nov. 25 VANDERBILT

TEXAS A&M
Sept. 2 at UCLA
Sept. 9 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 16 LOUISIANA
Sept. 23 vs. Arkansas (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 30 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 7 ALABAMA
Oct. 14 at Florida
Oct. 28 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 4 AUBURN
Nov. 11 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 18 at Ole Miss
Nov. 25 at LSU

VANDERBILT
Sept. 2 at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 9 ALABAMA A&M
Sept. 16 KANSAS STATE
Sept. 23 ALABAMA
Sept. 30 at Florida
Oct. 7 GEORGIA
Oct. 14 at Ole Miss
Oct. 28 at South Carolina
Nov. 4 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 11 KENTUCKY
Nov. 18 MISSOURI
Nov. 25 at Tennessee

SUN BELT

APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 2 at Georgia
Sept. 9 SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 16 at Texas State
Sept. 23 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 7 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 14 at Idaho
Oct. 21 COASTAL CAROLINA
Oct. 28 at Massachusets
Nov. 4 at ULM
Nov. 9 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 25 at Georgia State
Dec. 2 LOUISIANA

ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 2 at Nebraska
Sept. 9 MIAMI
Sept. 16 ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF
Sept. 23 at SMU
Oct. 4 at Georgia Southern
Oct. 14 COASTAL CAROLINA
Oct. 19 LOUISIANA
Oct. 28 at New Mexico State
Nov. 11 at South Alabama
Nov. 18 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 25 at ULM
Dec. 2 TROY

COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 2 MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 16 at UAB
Sept. 23 WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 30 at ULM
Oct. 7 GEORGIA STATE
Oct. 14 at Arkansas State
Oct. 21 at Appalachian State
Oct. 28 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 4 at Arkansas
Nov. 11 TROY
Nov. 18 at Idaho
Dec. 2 GEORGIA SOUTHERN

GEORGIA STATE
Aug. 31 TENNESSEE STATE
Sept. 16 at Penn State
Sept. 23 at Charlotte
Sept. 30 MEMPHIS
Oct. 7 at Coastal Carolina
Oct. 14 at ULM
Oct. 21 TROY
Oct. 26 SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 4 at Georgia Southern
Nov. 11 at Texas State
Nov. 25 APPALACHIAN STATE
Dec. 2 IDAHO

GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Sept. 2 at Auburn
Sept. 9 at New Hampshire
Sept. 23 at Indiana
Oct. 4 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 14 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 21 at Massachusets
Oct. 28 at Troy
Nov. 4 GEORGIA STATE
Nov. 9 at Appalachian State
Nov. 18 SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 25 at Louisiana
Dec. 2 at Coastal Carolina

IDAHO
Aug. 31 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 9 UNLV
Sept. 16 at Western Michigan
Sept. 23 at South Alabama
Oct. 7 LOUISIANA
Oct. 14 APPALACHIAN STATE
Oct. 21 at Missouri
Oct. 28 ULM
Nov. 2 at Troy
Nov. 18 COASTAL CAROLINA
Nov. 25 at New Mexico State
Dec. 2 at Georgia State

LOUISIANA
Sept. 2 SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA
Sept. 9 at Tulsa
Sept. 16 at Texas A&M
Sept. 23 ULM
Oct. 7 at Idaho
Oct. 12 TEXAS STATE
Oct. 19 at Arkansas State
Nov. 4 at South Alabama
Nov. 11 at Ole Miss
Nov. 18 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 25 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Dec. 2 at Appalachian State

LOUISIANA-MONROE (ULM)
Aug. 31 at Memphis
Sept. 9 at Florida State
Sept. 16 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 23 at Louisiana
Sept. 30 COASTAL CAROLINA
Oct. 7 at Texas State
Oct. 14 GEORGIA STATE
Oct. 21 at South Alabama
Oct. 28 at Idaho
Nov. 4 APPALACHIAN STATE
Nov. 18 at Auburn
Nov. 25 ARKANSAS STATE

NEW MEXICO STATE
Aug. 31 at Arizona State
Sept. 9 at New Mexico
Sept. 16 TROY
Sept. 23 UTEP
Sept. 30 at Arkansas
Oct. 7 at Appalachian State
Oct. 14 at Georgia Southern
Oct. 28 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 4 at Texas State
Nov. 18 at Louisiana State
Nov. 25 IDAHO
Dec. 2 SOUTH ALABAMA

SOUTH ALABAMA
Sept. 2 at Mississippi
Sept. 9 OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 16 ALABAMA A&M
Sept. 23 IDAHO
Sept. 30 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 11 at Troy
Oct. 21 ULM
Oct. 26 at Georgia State
Nov. 4 LOUISIANA
Nov. 11 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 18 at Georgia Southern
Dec. 2 at New Mexico State

TEXAS STATE
Sept. 2 HOUSTON BAPTIST
Sept. 9 at Colorado
Sept. 16 APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 23 UTSA
Sept. 30 at Wyoming
Oct. 7 ULM
Oct. 12 at Louisiana
Oct. 28 at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 4 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 11 GEORGIA STATE
Nov. 18 at Arkansas State
Nov. 25 at Troy

TROY
Sept. 2 at Boise State
Sept. 9 ALABAMA STATE
Sept. 16 at New Mexico State
Sept. 23 AKRON
Sept. 30 at LSU
Oct. 11 SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 21 at Georgia State
Oct. 28 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 2 IDAHO
Nov. 11 at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 25 TEXAS STATE
Dec. 2 at Arkansas State

SEC RECRUITING

By Luke Stampini, 247Sports.com

Alabama

Overview: For the seventh consecutive year, Alabama signed the nation's top recruiting class. The Crimson Tide loaded up on offensive playmakers as they continue to evolve to a more wide-open offense. Alabama went national with its recruiting efforts, inking prospects from California, Florida, Texas, Hawaii, Georgia, Kentucky as well as several in-state prospects.

Headliner: **Najee Harris, RB** — The versatile five-star running back brings the size you often see from Crimson Tide ball carriers as he stands 6-foot-2, 227-pounds. However, Harris is a very effective pass-catcher out of the backfield and is surprisingly elusive in the open field given his size.

Sleeper: **Christopher Allen, LB** — It's hard to call a prospect ranked just outside the top-100 a sleeper, but the 6-4, 235-pounder has the potential to become a high first round draft pick in a few years. Allen was overshadowed by others with higher rankings in Alabama's class, but he could be the Tide's next great outside 'backer.

Bottom Line: Nick Saban continues to stock his roster with elite talent on both sides of the ball. The Crimson Tide will continue to have a team capable of competing for national titles for the foreseeable future, especially with their focus on landing elite prospects on both the offensive and defensive lines.

Georgia

Overview: Georgia landed difference-makers up and down its class, but addressing the need on the offensive line was clearly the highlight of the 2017 recruiting cycle. Five members of the Bulldogs class were four and five-star offensive linemen, and several are in line to earn playing time this fall.

Headliner: **Isaiah Wilson, OT** — The massive five-star offensive tackle will be in the mix to start for Georgia in year one. The Bulldogs need instant help in the trenches and Wilson was a recruit they targeted as one that could provide that. Standing 6-7, 350 pounds, Wilson is a mountain of a prospect with a world of potential.

Sleeper: **Eric Stokes, CB** — The three-star recruit has blazing speed having run a 10.40-second 100-meters in the past. Stokes brings good length (6-0) to the cornerback position. While he might still need some seasoning at cornerback, the physical tools are there to become an elite defender down the road.

Bottom Line: Georgia has always recruited well, but it appears head coach Kirby Smart has taken the Bulldogs recruiting efforts to a new level. Look for Georgia's roster to eventually be one capable of competing for national titles if this recent trend under Smart continues.

LSU

Overview: Defensive Back University looks to continue its stellar play in the secondary by inking four top-100 defensive backs. In addition, quarterback has long been an issue for LSU, so the Tigers inked a pair of four-star signal callers in hopes of turning around the fortunes behind center.

Headliner: **JaCoby Stevens, S** — The 6-2, 214-pound five-star is one of the most dynamic playmakers in the nation. Stevens did it on both sides of the ball in high school, but LSU looks for him to be a difference-maker at safety for the Tigers.

Sleeper: **Jontre Kirklin, CB** — The high school quarterback will be making the move to cornerback at LSU. Kirklin is a dynamic 6-0, 180-pound athlete the Tigers see developing into a lockdown corner down the road. The athleticism is certainly there for Kirklin to make the transition on the next level.

Bottom Line: LSU will continue to field a salty defense for years to come thanks to this 2017 signing class. If one of the two quarterbacks signed can become a difference-maker that propels the Tigers' offense to the next level, LSU should become a national title contender.

Auburn

Overview: Auburn did an excellent job landing junior college and high school prospects that should provide an immediate boost to the team this fall. Quarterback, offensive line, linebacker are all positions that will see benefits from this signing on the field right away.

Headliner: **Jarrett Stidham, QB** — The 6-3, 210-pound signal caller was brought in to start immediately. Stidham is one of the most talented quarterbacks Gus Malzahn has had to operate his system. Look for his arm to open up the passing game for the Tigers and their young wide receiving corps this fall.

Sleeper: **Alec Jackson, DT** — The 6-5, 270-pound three-star prospect has elite size and all the top programs were chasing for his

TOP 20 INCOMING SEC RECRUITS

Rk.	Player	Ht./Wt.	Pos.	Hometown/School	College
1.	Najee Harris	6-2/227	RB	Antioch, Calif.	Alabama
2.	Alex Leatherwood	6-6/327	OT	Pensacola, Fla./Washington	Alabama
3.	Dylan Moses	6-3/234	LB	Bradenton, Fla./IMG Academy	Alabama
4.	Trey Smith	6-6/313	OT	Jackson, Tenn./University School	Tennessee
5.	Jarrett Stidham	6-2/210	QB	Waco, Texas/McLennan C.C.	Auburn
6.	Isaiah Wilson	6-7/350	OT	Brooklyn, N.Y./Poly Prep	Georgia
7.	JaCoby Stevens	6-2/214	S	Murfreesboro, Tenn./Oakland	LSU
8.	Jerry Jeudy	6-1/177	WR	Pompano Beach, Fla./Deerfield Beach	Alabama
9.	Richard LeCounte III	5-10.5/174	S	Riceboro, Ga./Liberty County	Georgia
10.	Isaiah Buggs	6-5/292	DE	Perkinston, Miss./Miss. Gulf Coast C.C.	Alabama
11.	LaBryan Ray	6-4/260	DE	Madison, Ala./James Clemons	Alabama
12.	Calvin Ashley	6-6/310	OT	Washington, D.C./St. John's College	Auburn
13.	Tua Tagovailoa	6-1/219	QB	Honolulu, Hawaii/St. Louis	Alabama
14.	D'Andre Swift	5-9/222	RB	Philadelphia, Pa./St. Joseph's	Georgia
15.	Jedrick Wills	6-5/318	OT	Lexington, Ky./Lafayette	Alabama
16.	K'Lavon Chaisson	6-4/227	DE	Houston, Texas/North Shore	LSU
17.	Andrew Thomas	6-5/335	OT	Atlanta, Ga./Pace Academy	Georgia
18.	Jake Fromm	6-1/229	QB	Warner Robins, Ga./Houston County	Georgia
19.	Austin Deculus	6-6/345	OT	Cypress, Texas/Cy-Fair	LSU
20.	Deangelo Gibbs	6-2/204	S	Longanville, Ga./Grayson	Georgia

signature. Jackson has the potential to be a difference-maker on the interior of the defensive line for the Tigers given proper time to develop his game.

Bottom Line: Auburn has had the talent throughout its roster to compete for national titles in recent years, but the Tigers could not figure out the quarterback position to really get their offense clicking on all cylinders. If Stidham can live up to the hype, Auburn might be a legit playoff contender.

Florida

Overview: Florida created plenty of buzz on National Signing Day as it landed six commits that day to propel the class to No. 11 in the nation. That was good enough to be the highest ranked recruiting class in head coach Jim McElwain's short tenure with the Gators.

Headliner: **Tedarrell Slaton, DT** — The 6-4, 360-pound prospect could help Florida on either the defensive or offensive lines. However, Slaton will start his career on defense as the Gators are thin on numbers on the interior of their line. Look for the powerful Slaton to compete for snaps his first year on campus.

Sleeper: **Nick Smith, LB** — The 6-3, 210-pound prospect is an elite athlete that also excelled on the basketball court in high school. Smith really started to garner more recruiting attention after a stellar senior season. The outside linebacker has the potential to be a difference-maker for the Gators down the road.

Bottom Line: Florida needed a strong close after looking stagnant on the recruiting trail for much of the cycle, and that's exactly what they got. After losing three starters in the secondary, the Gators also addressed their needs at the position by inking a total of six defensive backs.

Texas A&M

Overview: Texas A&M had nine of the 27 members of its 2017 recruiting class enroll early and go through spring drills, three of which could earn starting jobs this fall. The Aggies recruiting class was good enough to finish No. 12 in the nation.

Headliner: **Anthony Hines, LB** — The 6-3, 225-pound four-star recruit went through spring drills and is penciled in as a starter on the Aggies defense already. Hines is a very productive player that shows great instincts on the field. He figures to be a key part of the Aggies defense for years to come.

Sleeper: **Camron Horry, TE** — The tight end position is wide open for the 6-5, 260-pound Horry to step in and earn snaps during his first year. The three-star recruit certainly brings size to the position. Horry is the son of former NBA standout Robert Horry.

Bottom Line: Texas A&M has a solid nucleus of 2017 signees that should see significant playing time this fall. The class also infused the roster with even more offensive talent that should continue help A&M light up the scoreboard for years to come.

Tennessee

Overview: Tennessee landed the No. 17 recruiting class in the nation, with prospects coming from numerous states across the Southeast. The Vols were able to sign three of the top six in-state recruits as well. The front seven on defense was certainly bolstered with the additions in the 2017 class.

Headliner: **Trey Smith, OL** — The five-star recruit opted to stay in-state, a recruiting battle the Vols desperately needed to win. Standing 6-6, 313 pounds, Smith looks ready to hold his own in the rough SEC in year one. Look for Smith compete for a starting job this fall.

Sleeper: **Matthew Butler, DT** — Only a three-star recruit, the 6-4, 285-pound Butler has the potential to be a very effective three-technique defensive tackle. He uses his quickness to knife through the offensive line and cause havoc in the backfield. Butler is another that could earn snaps as a true freshman.

Bottom Line: The Vols did an excellent job landing recruits that can make an immediate impact on the field this fall, including Smith. Tennessee, with the help of Smith, also replenished its numbers on both the defensive and offensive lines,
both key position groups in the SEC.

South Carolina

Overview: South Carolina's 24-man 2017 recruiting class ranked No. 21 in the nation. The Gamecocks inked several prospects that should bolster their defense in the years to come as well. South Carolina took care of its backyard also by landing six of the state's top eight prospects.

Headliner: **Jamyest Williams, CB** — The ultra-competitive and quick 5-9, 175-pound corner looks to be a natural fit at nickelback for the Gamecocks. Williams has less than ideal size, but the prospect simply makes plays on the football field. He is one of the most explosive athletes in the entire 2017 class.

Sleeper: **Jaylin Dickerson, S** — Only a three-star recruit out of high school, the 6-1, 180-pound Dickerson enrolled at South Carolina early and went through spring drills. Head coach Will Muschamp believes Dickerson could be one of the best safeties he has coached. Look for Dickerson to play early for the Gamecocks.

Bottom Line: South Carolina needed to get better on the defensive side of the ball and several recruits in the 2017 class should make immediate impacts this fall, including Williams, defensive ends Javon Kinlaw and M.J. Webb, all four-star recruits. The Gamecocks also continued to add more offensive weapons to an already young offense.

Mississippi State

Overview: Mississippi State went heavy on the junior college prospects in 2017 signing nine in total. Overall the Bulldogs' class, which features 13 early enrollees, finished No. 24 in the nation. Mississippi State is looking for the 2017 class to provide immediate help on the field this fall.

Headliner: **Willie Gay, LB** — The 6-2, 223-pound linebacker was an Army All-American this past winter. Mississippi State expects Gay to earn significant snaps as a true freshman with his elite athleticism and instincts. The four-star recruit flies around the field and makes plays sideline to sideline.

Sleeper: **Tyler Williams, CB** — The 6-2, 172-pound corner enrolled early and went through spring drills. Williams brings elite length to the cornerback position, and the three-star prospect looks to be Mississippi State's steal of the class. Look for Williams to earn snaps as a true freshman.

Bottom Line: Head coach Dan Mullen was looking to infuse his roster with prospects that can help this fall, that is why there was such a focus on junior college prospects and recruits that could enroll early. Mullen also landed his highest rated quarterback at MSU when four-star Keytaon Thompson picked the Bulldogs.

Arkansas

Overview: Of the 25 members in the Arkansas 2017 class, nine enrolled early with the hopes of helping on the field this fall. The Razorbacks also inked five junior college prospects and they look to help immediately. The class as a whole ranked No. 28 in the nation.

Headliner: **Brandon Martin, WR** — The 6-4, 205-pound junior college receiver went through spring drills, and looks ready to be a playmaker in the SEC. The four-star recruit is not only physically imposing, but Martin also brings speed to stretch the field vertically. Look for him to start immediately for Arkansas.

Sleeper: **Shane Clenin, OL** — The 6-6, 295-pound Clenin is another early enrollee getting rave reviews after a strong spring. Arkansas has long produced talented offensive linemen under Bret Bielema, and Clenin looks to be next. Clenin has shown good mobility and the nasty disposition needed to play in the trenches.

Bottom Line: Arkansas is looking for immediate help, and should get it from a class heavy on junior college and early enrollee prospects. Look for the Razorbacks to continue their ground and pound offense thanks to three offensive linemen signees that measure over 6-5, 280 pounds each.

Kentucky

Overview: Kentucky hammered the states of Florida and Ohio in this recruiting class, which finished ranked No. 29 overall. The Wildcats also dipped into the junior college ranks looking for prospects that could help the team this fall.

Headliner: **Lynn Bowden, ATH** — The dynamic 6-1, 190-pound athlete was a high school quarterback and a four-star recruit. Bowden could still be a 'Wildcat quarterback' for UK, or he could factor in as a slot receiver. Regardless where he lines up, Bowden is impressive with the ball in his hands.

Sleeper: **Clevan Thomas, WR** — Only a three-star recruit coming out of high school, the 5-11, 190-pound Thomas enrolled early and turned heads during spring practices. Thomas is focused and physically ready to contribute this fall. Look for the Florida native to earn significant snaps during his first season.

Bottom Line: Kentucky continues to identify and sign under-the-radar recruits that fit its system. Focusing recruiting efforts on football-mad states like Florida and Ohio could pay off in the long run as the Wildcats look to get on top of the SEC East.

Ole Miss

Overview: There is no doubt the NCAA investigation into Ole Miss hampered recruiting. The Rebels class ranked No. 30 in the nation, much lower than recent years. However, Ole Miss was still able to land elite recruits that should be able to contribute early in their careers.

Headliner: **D.D. Bowie, WR** — The four-star receiver is explodes out of his breaks which helps create separation from defensive backs. At 6-1, 187 pounds, Bowie has good size, but it's his straight-line speed and ability to stretch the field that have many around Ole Miss excited about his future.

Sleeper: **Brenden Williams, LB** — The three-star junior college recruit enrolled early and received rave reviews this spring. The hard-hitting 6-3, 232-pound Williams will see plenty of snaps this fall for Ole Miss as the Rebels look for him to man the middle linebacker position.

Bottom Line: It was a less than ideal situation to recruit under, but Ole Miss did the best they could and appear to have weathered the storm rather well. The Rebels still landed prospects that should be impact players in the SEC for years to come.

Missouri

Overview: Missouri had the nation's No. 47 recruiting class in 2017. Three January decommitments hampered the momentum down the stretch, but the Tigers inked a pair of junior college defensive linemen, Malik Young and Walter Palmore, that should contribute this fall. In-state receiver Daron Davis should provide a boost on offense too.

Headliner: **Daron Davis, WR** — Standing 6-2, 190 pounds, Davis is a physical specimen. That size will help the three-star recruit make the transition to the SEC. Davis spent time in high school as a running back, so he's accustom to contact, but he also flashed speed to be a deep threat as a receiver too.

Sleeper: **Larry Rountree III, RB** — The 5-10, 183-pound back was a late riser that Missouri jumped on after a terrific senior season. The three-star prospect is a decisive runner that gets up field quickly. Rountree III is also a valuable weapon in the passing game coming out of the backfield.

Bottom Line: If Missouri wants to get back to the top of the SEC East, several of these lower-rated recruits are going to have to be surprise, under-the-radar types. However, the five junior college recruits in the class should provide an immediate boost to the current roster.

Vanderbilt

Overview: Vanderbilt's 2017 recruiting class finished ranked as the No. 62 class in the nation. It was on the small side with only 20 new additions. Look for the Commodores to continue to be a salty bunch on defense with several key additions to that side of the ball.

Headliner: **Dimitri Moore, LB** — The three-star recruit enrolled early and impressed during spring practices. Look for the 6-2, 200-pound linebacker from powerhouse Cedar Hill (Texas) High to see significant action during his first year on campus. The hard-hitting back makes plays sideline to sideline.

Sleeper: **Stone Edwards, DE** — The 6-4, 240-pound edge-rusher did not have much action with his recruitment until Vanderbilt swooped in to sign him. However, Edwards showed he is able to compete with the best after an impressive showing at the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas in December. Edwards has the potential to be a difference-maker for the 'Dores.

Bottom Line: A relatively small class did depress class rankings some, but Vanderbilt rarely ranks high when it comes to recruits. Ultimately, the 'Dores did sign a good amount of talent on the defensive side of the ball that should help for years to come.

TOP TO BOTTOM

1. Alabama
2. Auburn
3. Georgia
4. LSU
5. Florida
6. Arkansas
7. Tennessee
8. Texas A&M
9. South Carolina
10. Kentucky
11. Mississippi State
12. Ole Miss
13. Vanderbilt
14. Missouri

PICKING THE SEC

It's still Bama's world, but strong contenders emerge

Is there any doubt Alabama has enjoyed the most extended dominance in the SEC since Bear Bryant?

Coach Nick Saban has won four national championships since 2009 and participated in the College Football Playoff all three years of its existence. The Crimson Tide also has won three consecutive SEC titles, two with a fifth-year senior quarterback and one with a true freshman.

It doesn't seem to matter who pulls the trigger, the Tide has enough supporting talent on offense and enough stifling talent on defense to win. So, yeah, Alabama is favored to win the SEC, again.

The team most likely to supplant Alabama in the West — and the SEC overall — is Auburn, which is solid in many areas but must get a big year from Baylor transfer quarterback Jarrett Stidham, who has the skill set to run Gus Malzahn's attack.

LSU could challenge, if coach Ed Orgeron gets consistent quarterback play. Sure, that's a big if.

The East Division appears wide-open again. Florida has won it the past two years with a super defense and suspect offense. Can that formula work three years in a row?

EAST DIVISION

Georgia gets the nod over Florida based on a more proven quarterback, outstanding running backs in Nick Chubb and Sony Michel and enough returning defensive players.

Coach Kirby Smart enters his second season with a second-year quarterback in Jacob Eason, who showed flashes but not consistency.

Florida has had erratic and inconsistent quarterback play the past two years, but that hasn't stopped Jim McElwain from hoisting the East Division trophy. The Gators last season ranked near the bottom of the SEC in passing efficiency, using quarterbacks Luke Del Rio and Austin Appleby, two transfers. But the defense rose to the occasion to help the Gators beat Georgia and LSU to capture the East. The defense should be stout again.

Tennessee loses record-setting quarterback Joshua Dobbs, explosive running back Alvin Kamara and productive receiver Josh Malone, plus all-time sack leader Derek Barnett. The window for Tennessee might have closed, at least for this season.

South Carolina upset Tennessee last year behind quarterback Jake Bentley, but the Gamecocks don't have enough talent to contend. Neither does the rest of the division.

CONFERENCE PICKS

SEC EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Georgia	RB Nick Chubb didn't turn pro; QB Jacob Eason is still a bundle of potential.	The Dawgs didn't fare well in close games last season; defense has some holes.	Georgia is the favorite to win the East because it has fewer weaknesses than everyone else.
2. Florida	2016 defense was second in the SEC and should be good again despite personnel losses.	Offense was 12th in the SEC last season, and stability at quarterback remains elusive.	Maybe offense will surprise, but Gators will come up just short in the East this time.
3. Tennessee	Defense (fourth in SEC last season) still solid; secondary stellar; better skill at WR.	The Vols lose three key offensive playmakers, plus their all-time sack leader.	Hard to imagine UT could match 9-4 record of last season with those key personnel losses.
4. South Carolina	QB Jake Bentley was strong down the stretch; the team is solid at receiver.	Gamecocks ranked last in the SEC in scoring and might not be stout enough on the lines.	Still lacks the overall talent to be relevant in the SEC, but 7-5 is possible; future looks brighter.
5. Kentucky	Run game exploded last season, as Wildcats ranked third in SEC in rushing (234.2 ypg).	The defense just hasn't been very productive; can it stand toe-to-toe with league's best?	Investing further in Mark Stoops was a good idea, but is four league wins the team's cap?
6. Vanderbilt	Elite RB Ralph Webb returns (1,283 yards) and the offense could break out.	Had SEC-low nine TD passes last season, was last in the league in passing efficiency.	Veteran team will sneak into bowl again, likely pull an upset along the way.
7. Missouri	QB Drew Lock was second in the SEC in passing yards last year (3,399).	The Tigers defense went from formidable to last in the SEC in 2016 (479.7 ypg).	There are some reasons for optimism and Mizzou should be better than 4-8, but someone has to finish last.
SEC WEST			
1. Alabama	Yeah, guess what? These guys are loaded with talent and never miss a beat.	The Tide did lose five key defensive players and are adjusting to a new OC.	Nick Saban shrugs off any and all personnel losses. Bama gets to playoff once again.
2. Auburn	The run game led the SEC last season (271.3 ypg); QB Jarrett Stidham makes it all better.	Stidham does need to vastly upgrade the passing game; DE Carl Lawson is gone to the NFL.	This team looks dangerous and on the verge of putting it all together.
3. LSU	RB Derrius Guice had 1,387 yards in seven starts; the defense is strong again.	Same stories: QB play must improve and LSU hasn't beaten Alabama since 2011.	Ed Orgeron brought energy to a stale program, and a 10-win season is possible.
4. Arkansas	QB Austin Allen was third in the SEC in efficiency; RB Rawleigh Williams III had 1,360 yards.	The defense struggled last season; will a switch in scheme energize the same ol' guys?	Offense will be fine, defense still a problem. Yeah, we see the same ups and downs as 2016.
5. Texas A&M	WR-KR Christian Kirk is one of the SEC's most dynamic players, a joy to watch.	Aggies must replace star DE Myles Garrett, QB Trevor Knight, complementary WRs.	Not a good time for Kevin Sumlin to not have the right pieces to contend in the West.
6. Miss. State	QB Nick Fitzgerald is back after leading the SEC in total offense (3,798 yards).	Still can't really trust that defense, which allowed 31.8 points, 281.5 passing yards per game.	Watching Fitzgerald continue to improve will be fun, but this looks like another break-even year.
7. Ole Miss	QB Shea Patterson proved late last season that he is an able replacement for Chad Kelly.	What happened to that once-solid D? Rebs were last in SEC vs. the run and in points allowed.	NCAA sanctions mean no bowl this season. How team reacts is anyone's guess.

WEST DIVISION

Alabama changes quarterbacks and coordinators, but keeps rolling thanks to being atop the recruiting rankings for ... well, it seems like forever.

Saban is 119-19 at Bama, 76-8 in the past six years. He hasn't lost to rival (and former employer) LSU since 2011, or Tennessee since he arrived at the Capstone.

Saban has five national titles, one shy of the legendary Bear Bryant. Is there any doubt No. 6 is in the near future?

Auburn tied LSU for second in the West last year, thanks to a powerful run game and a much-improved defense. The Tigers' hopes rest on the arm — and legs — of Stidham, who emerged from spring as the starter.

LSU has its usual array of talent. Orgeron brought in coordinator Mike Canada to spruce up an outdated offense. The question: Is Danny Etling good enough to beat the elite in the SEC?

Arkansas, Ole Miss and Mississippi State have good quarterbacks but are deficient on defense. Texas A&M is again looking for a quarterback.

— Jimmy Hyams

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Austin Allen	Arkansas
Strongest arm	Jacob Eason	Georgia
Best scrambler	Jalen Hurts	Alabama
Coolest in the clutch	Jalen Hurts	Alabama
Toughest to bring down	Kamryn Pettway	Auburn
Best hands	Calvin Ridley	Alabama
Most dangerous deep threat	Antonio Callaway	Florida
Best pass blocker	Jonah Williams	Alabama
Best run blocker	Braden Smith	Auburn
Best cover man	Minkah Fitzpatrick	Alabama
Best pass rusher	Marquis Haynes	Ole Miss
Special teams demon	Daniel Bituli	Tennessee

Most Valuable Player

Jalen Hurts, QB, Alabama, So.

Offensive Player of the Year

Derrius Guice, RB, LSU, Jr.

Defensive Player of the Year

Minkah Fitzpatrick, DB, Alabama, Jr.

Newcomer of the Year

Jarrett Stidham, QB, Auburn, So.

Lindy's **ALL-SEC TEAM**

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Jalen Hurts	So.	Alabama
RB	Derrius Guice	Jr.	LSU
RB	Kamryn Pettway	Jr.	Auburn
WR	Calvin Ridley	Jr.	Alabama
WR	Christian Kirk	Jr.	Texas A&M
TE	Hayden Hurst	Jr.	South Carolina
C	Frank Ragnow	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	Martez Ivey	Jr.	Florida
OL	Jonah Williams	So.	Alabama
OL	Will Clapp	Jr.	LSU
OL	Braden Smith	Sr.	Auburn
AP	Christian Kirk	Jr.	Texas A&M
PK	Daniel Carlson	Sr.	Auburn

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Da'Ron Payne	Jr.	Alabama
DL	Marquis Haynes	Sr.	Ole Miss
DL	CeCe Jefferson	Jr.	Florida
DL	Trent Thompson	Jr.	Georgia
LB	Arden Key	Jr.	LSU
LB	Roquan Smith	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Skai Moore	Sr.	South Carolina
DB	Minkah Fitzpatrick	Jr.	Alabama
DB	Dominick Sanders	Sr.	Georgia
DB	Armani Watts	Sr.	Texas A&M
DB	Ronnie Harrison	Jr.	Alabama
P	JK Scott	Sr.	Alabama

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Nick Fitzgerald	Jr.	Mississippi State
RB	Nick Chubb	Sr.	Georgia
RB	Bo Scarbrough	Jr.	Alabama
WR	J'Mon Moore	Sr.	Missouri
WR	Antonio Callaway	Jr.	Florida
TE	Issac Nauta	So.	Georgia
C	Coleman Thomas	Sr.	Tennessee
OL	Jashon Robertson	Sr.	Tennessee
OL	Ross Pierschbacher	Jr.	Alabama
OL	K.J. Malone	Sr.	LSU
OL	Paul Adams	Jr.	Missouri
AP	Antonio Callaway	Jr.	Florida
PK	Gary Wunderlich	Sr.	Ole Miss

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Marcell Frazier	Sr.	Missouri
DL	Jabari Zuniga	So.	Florida
DL	Marlon Davidson	So.	Auburn
DL	Da'Shawn Hand	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Shaun Dion Hamilton	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Rashaan Evans	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Jordan Jones	Jr.	Kentucky
DB	Donte Jackson	Jr.	LSU
DB	Duke Dawson	Jr.	Florida
DB	Tray Matthews	Sr.	Auburn
DB	Mike Edwards	Jr.	Kentucky
P	Johnny Townsend	Sr.	Florida

OFFENSE - THIRD TEAM

QB	Austin Allen	Sr.	Arkansas
RB	Rawleigh Williams III	Jr.	Arkansas
RB	Ralph Webb	Sr.	Vanderbilt
WR	Deebo Samuel	Jr.	South Carolina
WR	Jauan Jennings	Jr.	Tennessee
TE	DeAndre Goolsby	Sr.	Florida
C	Bradley Bozeman	Sr.	Alabama
OL	Austin Golson	Sr.	Auburn
OL	Zack Bailey	Jr.	South Carolina
OL	Hjalte Froholdt	Jr.	Arkansas
OL	Isaiah Wynn	Sr.	Georgia
AP	Kerryon Johnson	Jr.	Auburn
PK	Eddy Pineiro	Jr.	Florida

DEFENSE - THIRD TEAM

DL	Jonathan Ledbetter	Jr.	Georgia
DL	Raekwon Davis	So.	Alabama
DL	McTelvin Agim	So.	Arkansas
DL	Nifae Lealao	Sr.	Vanderbilt
LB	Otaro Alaka	Jr.	Texas A&M
LB	Lorenzo Carter	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Dre Greenlaw	Jr.	Arkansas
DB	Kevin Toliver	Jr.	LSU
DB	Chauncey Gardner	So.	Florida
DB	Brandon Bryant	Jr.	Mississippi State
DB	Ryan Pulley	Jr.	Arkansas
P	Trevor Daniel	Sr.	Tennessee

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 2	
Alabama vs. FSU (Atlanta)	Matchup of teams that won the national title in 2015, 2013.
Florid vs. Michigan (Arlington)	Rematch of 2015 Citrus Bowl, won by Michigan, 41-7.
LSU vs. BYU (Houston)	Ed Orgeron stands on his own in a somewhat tricky opener.
Texas A&M at UCLA	Aggies have to solve UCLA QB Josh Rosen; won last year's meeting.
Sept. 4	
Tennessee vs. Georgia Tech (Atlanta)	Beware: The Jackets went 3-0 against SEC East teams last season.
Sept. 9	
TCU at Arkansas	Hogs upset the Horned Frogs in a thriller last season.
Auburn at Clemson	The Tigers of the SEC get a great early gauge on how good they are.
Georgia at Notre Dame	Going way back: Dawgs won 1980 national title with Sugar Bowl win vs. Irish.
Sept. 16	
Tennessee at Florida	Vols snapped 12-game losing skid to Gators with a second-half rally.
Sept. 23	
Arkansas vs. A&M (Arlington)	A&M rallied to get fifth straight win over Hogs at Cowboys Stadium.
Sept. 30	
Georgia at Tennessee	UT won last year on last-second Hail Mary; Dawgs want revenge.
Oct. 7	
Alabama at Texas A&M	That Johnny Manziel-led Aggies upset seems like a long time ago.
LSU at Florida	Gators upended LSU in 2016 in controversial game moved to Baton Rouge.
Oct. 14	
Auburn at LSU	Likely West contenders collide; this one could decide who stays in race.
Texas A&M at Florida	Rare meeting between cross-division teams; last one came in 2012.
BYU at Mississippi State	Cougars won 28-21 in two overtimes last season in Provo.
South Carolina at Tennessee	Gamecocks' upset last year ruined Vols chances of winning East.
Oct. 21	
Tennessee at Alabama	Nick Saban is 10-0 vs. Vols. Average score: 35-11.
LSU at Ole Miss	Ed Orgeron takes on his former team in a heated rivalry game.
Oct. 28	
Florida vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)	Gators have won three in a row, 21-6 in past 27 neutral-site meetings.
Nov. 4	
LSU at Alabama	Saban has won six in a row over former team in a usual heavyweight fight.
Nov. 11	
Georgia at Auburn	South's oldest rivalry; could definitely impact each divisional race.
Nov. 18	
LSU at Tennessee	First meeting since 2011; Tigers have won four in a row vs. Vols.
Nov. 25	
Alabama at Auburn	Amazing: Iron Bowl winner has played for eight straight national titles.
FSU at Florida	FSU has won four in a row over Gators, tying for longest series streak.

Sony Michel

Photo by Matt Bush-USA TODAY Sports

BOWL CONNECTIONS

One or more SEC teams are eligible for the four-team College Football Playoff. Those SEC teams not selected for the semifinals can be picked elsewhere in a New Year's Six bowl, likely the Orange.

SEC #1	Playoff/New Year's Six
SEC #2	Citrus vs. ACC
SEC #3-8	Outback vs. Big Ten
SEC #3-8	Taxslayer.com vs. ACC/Big Ten
SEC #3-8	Music City vs. ACC/Big Ten
SEC #3-8	Liberty vs. Big 12
SEC #3-8	Belk vs. ACC
SEC #3-8	Texas vs. Big 12
SEC #8-10	Birmingham vs. AAC
SEC #8-10	Independence vs. ACC

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1.	Minkah Fitzpatrick	DB	Alabama	Jr.	Has the versatility to play all over the secondary.
2.	Christian Kirk	WR/KR	Texas A&M	Jr.	Elite receiver who led nation in punt returns in 2015.
3.	Da'Ron Payne	NT	Alabama	Jr.	Another in long line of terrific Bama d-linemen.
4.	Arden Key	OLB	LSU	Jr.	Has had off-field issues, but the guy can rush the passer.
5.	Trent Thompson	DT	Georgia	Jr.	Entered summer with medical issues, which bear watching.
6.	Derrius Guice	RB	LSU	Jr.	Rushed for almost 1,400 yards, had two 250-yard games.
7.	CeCe Jefferson	DE	Florida	Jr.	A 5-star who has developed into SEC terror.
8.	Bo Scarbrough	RB	Alabama	Jr.	Big, bruising back with speed; lethal when healthy.
9.	Calvin Ridley	WR	Alabama	Jr.	Caught 72 passes last year, shifty, good hands.
10.	Nick Chubb	RB	Georgia	Sr.	Fast, strong, elusive, has had two 1,000-yard seasons.

*Only draft-eligible players included.

AROUND THE SEC

Ranking the best jobs in the SEC

The SEC nearly set history in the first round of the 2017 NFL Draft.

Twelve players from the league came off the board, starting at the top, where Texas A&M defensive end Myles Garrett went first overall to the Cleveland Browns, who somehow resisted the urge to take a quarterback.

The dozen selections tied for the most ever from one conference, matching the 2013 haul from the SEC and the 2006 group from the ACC.

Garrett was the 19th SEC player to be the No. 1 pick — and the sixth in the past 14 drafts. That's pretty good. The Pac-12 and the ACC are next in that time frame with ... two.

For the record, the other No. 1 overall SEC draft picks since 2014 are Ole Miss QB Eli Manning (2004), LSU QB JaMarcus Russell (2007), Georgia QB Matthew Stafford (2009), Auburn QB Cam Newton (2011) and South Carolina defensive end Jadeveon Clowney (2014).

LSU placed two players into the top 10 this year — running back Leonard Fournette at No. 4 and safety Jamal Adams at No. 6. They were joined in the first round by cornerback teammate Tre'Davious White at No. 27.

Surprisingly, no Alabama player went in the top 15, but then the run began. Baltimore grabbed cornerback Marlon Humphrey at No. 16. Defensive lineman Jonathan Allen went one pick later, then O.J. Howard (the first tight end) was selected at No. 19. Linebacker Reuben Foster was the fourth Tide alum to go in the first round, at No. 31.

Alabama's four first-rounders were the most in the country.

Dominating in the first round of the draft is nothing new for the SEC. The league's 12 first-round picks were five more than the second-best conference, the Big Ten. The SEC has had more first-rounders than any other league in six of the past seven drafts.

SEC Becomes More Offensive

The SEC has become more offensive — and that's a fact.

Last year, the SEC had a record nine teams average at least 30 points per game, In 2015, it was six.

If an SEC team allowed 24 points per game, that was good enough to be the fifth-stingiest defense. In 2015, giving up 24 points per game put an SEC team 10th in the conference.

Here's more: Last year, nine teams

FOUR-YEAR STANDINGS

The flattening continues in the East as the fattening continues in the West. Over the past four years, the spread is the West 22 games over .500 against the East ... and consider that even without Alabama's four-year record of 8-0, the West is still 14 games over breaking even.

Otherwise, the whole league seems to be settling into a holding pattern behind Alabama. It's the kind of parity only the NFL and the SEC office could love: Beyond the Tide's ridiculous 91 percent winning percentage in league games, 10 of the league's other 13 teams are between 41 and 63 percent.

And when you recognize that everybody won at least two league games last year, the coaches' warnings of "every game is losable" carries more weight.

EAST	SEC	Pct.	ALL	Pct.	C/D	B6	B	Comment
Georgia	20-12	.625	36-16	.692	0/0	0	4	Only the RS-freshmen have beaten Florida.
Florida	20-12	.625	30-22	.577	0/2	0	3	McElwain has the East figured out; it's a start.
Missouri	17-15	.531	32-20	.615	0/2	0	2	Need to get to a bowl for the first time in 3 yrs.
Tennessee	14-18	.438	30-21	.588	0/0	0	3	Best 3 yrs in SEC (12-12) since Fulmer (2006-08).
South Carolina	13-19	.406	27-24	.529	0/0	0	3	Six-win SEC campaigns seem like eons ago.
Vanderbilt	9-23	.281	22-28	.440	0/0	0	2	Back to Competitivesville for a while?
Kentucky	8-24	.250	19-30	.388	0/0	0	1	In today's SEC, a bowl streak is possible.
WEST	**SEC**	**Pct.**	**ALL**	**Pct.**	**C/D**	**B6**	**B**	**Comment**
Alabama	29-3	.906	51-6	.895	3/3	6	6	True Seniors: 40-4, 3 SEC titles in 3 years.
LSU	19-13	.594	35-15	.700	0/0	0	4	Tigers feel like they could be at crossroads.
Auburn	18-14	.563	35-18	.660	1/1	2	4	Back on the rise for real?
Ole Miss	16-16	.500	32-19	.624	0/0	2	3	That 2-6 was just a bump in the road ... or not.
Mississippi State	16-16	.500	32-20	.615	0/0	1	4	At least they kept the 7-year bowl streak alive.
Texas A&M	15-17	.469	33-19	.635	0/0	0	4	Seniors trying to finish above .500 in SEC.
Arkansas	10-22	.313	25-26	.490	0/0	0	3	Sub.-500 is not OK, even with weak bowls.

C=SEC championships; D=Division titles; B6=Big 6 Bowls; B=Bowls

allowed more than 400 total yards per game (three gave up over 450). In 2015, two allowed more than 400 yards.

Why? It wasn't because of stellar quarterback play (you can read about that elsewhere in this magazine) — and part of it is because 2015 was a bit of a down year offensively. But trend lines in recent seasons suggest the SEC's offensive boat is rising with the college football tide ... and, certainly, with a more diverse attack from the Tide.

When coach Nick Saban embraces tempo, you know something is up.

What to know for this season is that most of the best offensive players in the league return.

The SEC brings back 12 of its top 15 in passing yards, nine of the top 12 in passing efficiency, 11 of the top 14 in total offense and 12 of the top 13 in rushing (and that doesn't even include Alabama's Bo Scarbrough).

The SEC returns 10 players who rushed for more than 1,000 yards last season.

And they all might be running into less resistance. Of those 12 NFL first-rounders mentioned above? Nine came off the defensive side of the ball.

The offensive uprising will continue.

Coordinator Changes

In a rare occurrence, the SEC did NOT have an offseason firing. That's a bit of a technicality, of course. LSU fired Les Miles during the season after four games and replaced him with interim Ed Orgeron. Orgeron coached LSU to a 6-2 record, including a bowl win over Louisville.

The SEC did have 10 coordinator changes after having 12 the season before — and some of these transactions were rather large.

Alabama made two changes. Coach Nick Saban pushed offensive coordinator Lane Kiffin out the door before the Tide's national championship game, elevated Steve Sarkisian off the team's analyst staff, then lured Brian Daboll from the New England Patriots after Sarkisian went to the NFL.

LSU hired Matt Canada as offensive coordinator for $1.5 million after giving second-year defensive coordinator Dave Aranda a raise to $1.9 million. LSU has the highest paid coordinators in college football, while Orgeron is the only coach in the SEC West not making at least $4 million.

After Tennessee led the SEC in offensive touchdowns, offensive coordinator Mike DeBord was expected to retire. Instead, he took a job as OC at Indiana to be closer to

Matt Canada

Photo by Stephen Lew-USA TODAY Sports

home. Butch Jones promoted tight ends/special teams coach Larry Scott, although Scott has never called plays at the college level.

Florida hired former Miami head coach Randy Shannon to replace defensive coordinator Geoff Collins. Shannon's defense held Iowa to 226 yards and three points in the Outback Bowl.

Other defensive coordinator hires were Paul Rhoads at Arkansas, Todd Grantham at Mississippi State, Wesley McGriff at Ole Miss and Matt House at Kentucky. Other offensive coordinator hires were Chip Lindsey at Auburn and Phil Longo at Ole Miss.

Every SEC West team except Texas A&M hired at least one new coordinator. Each SEC East coordinator hire was an internal promotion.

Turning pro

The SEC had 24 players declare early for the NFL Draft, with Florida (five) and LSU (four) leading the way. Alabama, Tennessee and Texas A&M had three each.

Florida's defense was gutted as cornerbacks Jalen Tabor and Quincy Wilson, tackle Caleb Brantley and linebacker Alex Anzalone turned pro. The other was offensive tackle David Sharpe.

LSU lost first-round picks running back Leonard Fournette and safety Jamal Adams, as well as defensive tackle Davon Godchaux and receiver Malachi Dupre.

The SEC had had 130 players declare early in the past five years. Florida has lost 10 in the past two years.

Big openers

Neutral-site locations continue to attract SEC teams. On Labor Day weekend, five SEC teams will open their seasons in NFL stadiums.

The new Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta will be the venue for Alabama-Florida State Sept. 2, then Tennessee against Georgia Tech Sept. 4.

Florida takes on Michigan in the home of the Dallas Cowboys, AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, on Sept. 2. Also on opening weekend: LSU will play BYU in Houston's Reliant Stadium, and South Carolina will take on border-state foe North Carolina State at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, home of the Panthers.

SEC attendance numbers

The SEC led the nation in home attendance last season once again. Tennessee led the way overall by averaging more than 100,000 fans at home and for two neutral-site games.

The Vols drew 156,990 fans (the largest to see ever see a college football game) when it faced Virginia Tech in the Battle at Bristol. The game was played at NASCAR's Bristol Motor Speedway in upper East Tennessee.

Tennessee averaged 100,968 paid attendance at home, 112,743 for two neutral site games and 96,005 overall.

Texas A&M's renovated Kyle Field led the SEC in home attendance (101,917), with Alabama (101,821) and LSU (101,231) close behind. Georgia, Auburn and Florida each averaged more than 86,000.

SEC Set Bowl Record

After a stellar 9-2 record in bowl games in 2015, the SEC stumbled somewhat last season, going 6-7. But it wasn't all bad news.

The SEC played in the national championship game for the 10th time in 11 seasons, with Alabama falling on a last-second pass by Clemson. The SEC has won eight national titles since 2006.

The SEC sent a record-tying 12 teams to bowls last year (the SEC also sent 12 in 2014). The SEC had four wins over Top 25 opponents in the postseason. And the SEC has won 29 bowls in the past four years.

The SEC is the first conference in history to send at least 10 teams to bowls four consecutive years.

RATING THE SEC

QUARTERBACKS

1. Alabama
2. Mississippi State
3. Arkansas
4. Auburn
5. Missouri
6. Georgia
7. Ole Miss
8. South Carolina
9. Tennessee
10. Kentucky
11. LSU
12. Vanderbilt
13. Florida
14. Texas A&M

The SEC returns 11 of its top 14 quarterbacks in terms of total offense, nine of the top 12 in pass efficiency and nine of the top 12 in passing yards per game.

While the league has a lot of solid quarterbacks, it doesn't have much national star power.

Alabama's Jalen Hurts, named the SEC Offensive Player of the Year last season despite being a true freshman, was exposed a bit in several late-season games. Yet, he had the third-most total yards (3,734), accounted for 36 touchdowns and helped the Tide lead the SEC in scoring. Hurts was actually pushed in the spring by mid-term true freshman Tua Tagovailoa, who displayed uncanny passing accuracy.

Mississippi State's Nick Fitzgerald led the league in total yards (3,798) and actually outrushed Hurts by a considerable margin (1,375 yards to 954) in two fewer games. Arkansas' Austin Allen was third in the SEC in passing yards per game and pass efficiency and second in TD tosses (25).

The top newcomer could by Baylor transfer Jarrett Stidham of Auburn, who joins returning starter Sean White. Missouri's Drew Lock was second in the SEC in passing yards last season (3,399) and tied for third in TD passes (23).

Ole Miss' Shea Patterson showed great potential in limited playing time. South Carolina has great hope for the future with sophomore Jake Bentley behind center.

RUNNING BACKS

1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. Auburn
4. LSU
5. Arkansas
6. Vanderbilt
7. Missouri
8. Florida
9. Kentucky
10. Texas A&M
11. Tennessee
12. South Carolina
13. Mississippi State
14. Ole Miss

The SEC is usually stocked with quality running backs. This year is no exception. Nine backs who gained at least 1,000 yards last year return, and at least four other returners are capable of reaching 1,000.

Alabama's cradle is absurd. Damien Harris rushed for 1,037 yards last year, but Bo Scarbrough took over down the stretch, gained 812 (6.5 per carry) yards and scored 11 touchdowns. B.J. Emmons could start for several teams. And Najee Harris was rated the nation's No. 1 recruit last season.

Georgia features two backs who have had 1,000-yard seasons, Nick Chubb and Sony Michel, though both have suffered injuries. Auburn's Kamryn Pettway led the SEC in rushing yards per game (122.4) and Kerryon Johnson had 895 yards and a team-high 11 touchdowns.

LSU's Derrius Guice was brilliant last season, outperforming Leonard Fournette. Guice had a staggering 1,387 yards in seven starts, including two 250-yard games. He averaged 7.6 yards per carry and scored 16 TDs. Arkansas' Rawleigh Williams III (1,360) had the third-most yards. Ralph Webb had 1,283 yards to become Vanderbilt's all-time career rushing leader.

Three freshmen — Kentucky's Benny Snell (1,091), Missouri's Damarea Crockett (1,062) and Texas A&M's Trayveon Williams (1,057) — also topped 1,000 yards.

RECEIVERS

1. Florida
2. Alabama
3. Missouri
4. South Carolina
5. Georgia
6. Ole Miss
7. Texas A&M
8. Tennessee
9. Arkansas
10. Vanderbilt
11. Auburn
12. Mississippi State
13. LSU
14. Kentucky

Perhaps no position group in the SEC was hit harder by departures; two premier tight ends and four top wideouts are gone.

Seems odd to consider that one of the worst passing teams in the SEC could have a top collection of receivers. Antonio Callaway is big-time; he caught 54 passes last year despite nagging injuries. Brandon Powell (45 catches) is a threat, as is talented Tyrie Cleveland, who showed flashes as a true freshman. DeAndre Goolsby is second among returning tight ends in catches (38).

Alabama's Calvin Ridley (72 catches) is one of the top wideouts in the SEC. Robert Foster is talented but injury prone. Cam Sims is ready for a breakout season. Jerry Jeudy is a gifted freshman.

Missouri is led by J'Mon Moore (62 catches) — one of two SEC receivers with 1,000 yards. Johnathon Johnson (24 catches, 18.1 per catch) and Dimetrios Mason (47 catches) are solid.

South Carolina has several strong pass catchers. Hayden Hurst is the leading returner among tight ends (48). Wideouts Deebo Samuel (59 catches) and Bryan Edwards (44) are a solid 1-2 punch.

Georgia has wideout Terry Godwin (38) and Riley Ridley (19.8 yards on 12 catches) and two good tight ends in Jeb Blazevich and Isaac Nauta. Texas A&M might have the elite receiver in the league in Christian Kirk (league-best 83 catches).

OFFENSIVE LINE

1. Alabama
2. LSU
3. Tennessee
4. Arkansas
5. Georgia
6. Auburn
7. Kentucky
8. Texas A&M
9. Ole Miss
10. Florida
11. Missouri
12. South Carolina
13. Vanderbilt
14. Mississippi State

Alabama led the SEC in scoring and ranked second in rushing, thanks in part to one of the nation's best offensive lines. Tackle Jonah Williams, who as a freshman actually out-graded All-American Cam Robinson, anchors a solid unit and is moving from the right to the left side to replace the departed Robinson. Two-year starting guards Ross Pierschbacher and Lester Cotton and center Bradley Bozeman make this the SEC's top group.

LSU managed to rank fourth in the SEC in rushing thanks to two terrific backs but also despite a meager passing attack. Will Clapp and K.J. Malone are the top two blockers.

Florida tackle Martez Ivey is one of the league's best. Jawaan Taylor had an outstanding freshman season. Auburn led the SEC in rushing by a whopping 26 yards per game. Leading the way are guard-turned tackle Braden Smith and center Austin Golson.

Tennessee returns eight players who combined for 111 career starts — most in the SEC. Guard-center Jashon Robertson is the best lineman, Coleman Thomas is a solid center and Brett Kendrick is the most versatile.

Missouri's o-line was underrated a year ago. It helped produce a 1,000-yard rusher, a 1,000-yard receiver, a 3,300-yard passer and another back who rushed for 750 yards.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Antonio Callaway
Pos: WR Ht: 5-11 Wt: 197

Daniel Carlson
Pos: K Ht: 6-4 Wt: 218

DEFENSIVE LINE

1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. Florida
4. Auburn
5. LSU
6. Texas A&M
7. Vanderbilt
8. Tennessee
9. Mississippi State
10. Arkansas
11. Kentucky
12. Missouri
13. Ole Miss
14. South Carolina

Only Alabama can lose high draft picks to the NFL each season and return with a fantastic defensive line.

Da'Ron Payne is one of the premier defensive linemen in the country. Da'Shawn Hand is a talent who has yet to emerge. Watch out for jumbo-sized Raekwon Davis (6-7, 303). He is a budding star.

Georgia tackle Trent Thompson, a former five-star recruit, is a potential All-American. End Jonathan Ledbetter, who has had off-the-field troubles, was unblockable during the spring. John Atkins is a tough-nosed nose guard.

Florida keeps losing defensive linemen and keeps churnin' out good ones, although this year figures to be a drop-off. End CeCe Jefferson is an elite talent. Tackle Taven Bryan is the second-best D-lineman.

Auburn is led by sophomore tackle Marlon Davidson, who had a great freshman season as the Tigers were third in the SEC in run defense. But Auburn did lose its two best linemen. Texas A&M has two solid tackles in Dylan Mack and Kingsley Keke, but there's no replacing end Myles Garrett.

Tennessee will miss record-setting sacker Derek Barnett, but Jonathan Kongbo, Kahlil McKenzie, Shy Tuttle and Kendal Vickers could be formidable up front. Auburn's three starting backers compliment each other well.

LINEBACKERS

1. Georgia
2. Kentucky
3. Alabama
4. South Carolina
5. Texas A&M
6. Auburn
7. Florida
8. LSU
9. Arkansas
10. Tennessee
11. Mississippi State
12. Vanderbilt
13. Missouri
14. Ole Miss

Georgia has one of the best linebacking corps the SEC has seen in a decade. At 6-6, 242, outside linebacker Lorenzo Carter has the most pro potential, but inside linebacker Roquan Smith led the team in tackles (95). Davin Bellamy tied Carter with five sacks each. Natrez Patrick was second on the team with 59 stops.

Kentucky has a surprisingly good group, considering its run defense was weak last season. Jordan Jones is the leading returning tackler in the SEC (109), which included 15.5 tackles for loss. Denzil Ware had 70 stops, 5.5 sacks. Josh Allen had 62 tackles.

Alabama is always outstanding at linebacker. Rashaan Evans (53 tackles, four sacks) could end up being the superstar, but that might depend on the return to health of Shaun Dion Hamilton from a late-season ACL tear. He had 64 tackles last season, including nine for loss.

South Carolina is led by Skai Moore, who had 100 tackles in each of his first three seasons before missing last year due to injury.

Texas A&M's Otaro Alaka has All-SEC potential and Tyrel Dodson was defensive MVP of the Aggies' bowl game. Arkansas has a pair of solid linebackers in Dre Greenlaw and Randy Ramsey.

SECONDARY

1. Alabama
2. Florida
3. Georgia
4. LSU
5. Kentucky
6. Texas A&M
7. Auburn
8. Vanderbilt
9. South Carolina
10. Tennessee
11. Arkansas
12. Missouri
13. Mississippi State
14. Ole Miss

Florida and Alabama ranked 1-2 in the SEC last year in pass defense efficiency. They might do it again, except in reverse order.

The Crimson Tide's secondary is loaded, led by Minkah Fitzpatrick, who might be the best defensive back in the nation. He led the SEC with six interceptions, returning two for scores. Ronnie Harrison recorded 86 tackles. Anthony Averett had eight pass breakups. Tony Brown has talent. Trevon Diggs moved from receiver to corner in the spring and earned a starting spot.

Florida, which had one of the nation's best ratios of interceptions-to-touchdown passes allowed (16 to 8), once again has a solid secondary, despite losing three drafted players. Marcell Harris led the team with 73 tackles; Chauncey Gardner was second with three picks as a freshman and was the defensive MVP of the Outback Bowl; and Duke Dawson is an accomplished corner.

LSU has two talented defensive backs in Donte Jackson and Kevin Toliver. Georgia is led by Dominick Sanders (12 career interceptions) and Malkom Parrish from a unit that was second in the SEC in passing yards allowed per game. Kentucky returns three starters, led by Mike Edwards. Armani Watts stars in A&M's secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

1. Florida
2. Texas A&M
3. Tennessee
4. Auburn
5. Alabama
6. Kentucky
7. Ole Miss
8. Vanderbilt
9. South Carolina
10. Missouri
11. Arkansas
12. LSU
13. Georgia
14. Mississippi State

Florida figures to have superb special teams play. The Gators have one the nation's premier punters in Johnny Townsend (SEC-leading 47.9 yards per punt) and a strong-legged kicker in Eddy Pineiro, who hit 21 of 25 field goal attempts (11 of 13 beyond 40 yards). Antonio Callaway is an excellent punt returner who ran back two for scores two years ago.

Christian Kirk of Texas A&M is the nation's best punt returner. He averaged 21.7 yards last year with three touchdowns; he led the nation two years ago (24.4). Kirk averaged 28.8 yards on six kick returns. The Aggies have a solid punter in Shane Tripucka (42.9) and kicker Daniel LaCamera hit 17 of 24 field goal attempts.

Tennessee's Evan Berry led the nation in kick returns (38.3) two years ago. His average dropped to 32.9 on 14 returns last year as teams schemed and kicked away from him. Punter Trevor Daniel has averaged 44.6 and 45.7 yards in the past two years. Aaron Medley has been a solid kicker inside the 40 but erratic on longer tries.

Auburn's Daniel Carlson has been a weapon, converting 28 of 32 field-goal attempts after making 23 of 27 the year before. Ole Miss' Gary Wunderlich led in accuracy (22 of 23 FGA).

EXPLOSIVE GUICE PICKS UP WHERE FOURNETTE LEFT OFF

BY DAVE MOORMANN | PHOTO BY KIM KLEMENT-USA TODAY SPORTS

LSU still has a Fournette on its roster and a Heisman Trophy contender in its ranks.

But it's not what you think.

Leonard Fournette — whose younger brother Lanard is a backup running back for the Tigers — left a year early for the NFL, but the Tigers are one of the few programs that can shrug its shoulders and carry on. One Heisman-contending running back leaves. Another enters.

Junior running back Derrius Guice is the new envy of most everyone in college football, and he is laser-focused on his goals — whether it be the end zone, or maintaining the conduct of someone who has pulled himself out of a downtrodden neighborhood and grief-stricken background into the national spotlight.

Former LSU and NFL running back Jacob Hester may have said it best when he searched for words to characterize Guice's style.

"He's unique," Hester said.

Leonard Fournette was universally described as a physical freak. Guice has some of that, too. You don't run for 1,387 yards and 15 touchdowns on just 183 carries without having an abundance of physical gifts.

But Guice's success isn't just because of DNA. It's also about what is between his ears, and what he feels in his heart.

The most-used phrase about his style?

He runs *angry*.

When the agile but sturdy 5-11, 212-pound Guice gets moving, watch out. Like last season, when he:

- Broke off the longest run in LSU history, 96 yards vs. Arkansas.
- Set the school single-game rushing record with 285 yards vs. Texas A&M.
- Or flattened 188-pound Louisville kicker Blanton Creque at midfield at the end of a 50-yard kick return in the Citrus Bowl. (It's worth stopping here and finding the YouTube video.)

"I'm going to give my all every time and show them (the opposition) that I'm no slouch," Guice said. "Just do what I gotta do to keep the ball moving, keep the chains moving and keep everybody happy."

Guice doesn't figure to shoulder the brunt of LSU's rushing attack in the same way that Fournette did, when healthy, in his two-plus years under Les Miles, who was fired early last season.

"Derrius is going to be our guy," said coach Ed Orgeron, who replaced Miles and diminished Fournette's role once his ankle injury worsened. "I hope all four of our backs can contribute. Derrius can't carry the whole load by himself, obviously."

No matter what the other running backs — including Darrel Williams, Nick Brossette and the younger Fournette — have to offer, this is Guice's show. Even with a new offensive scheme — less I-formation, more space and spread — Guice is the central figure.

There were hints of a bigger pass-catching role for Guice this season.

"I like it. I don't want to get too detailed about it," he said with a smile early this spring. "But I like it. It's going to be a great fit for us this year."

His accomplishments in 2016 were shocking in a season in which one of the big preseason storylines was Fournette's bid to win the Heisman Trophy. Fournette never fully recovered from an ankle injury suffered in preseason camp, and Guice made his first career start in the second game of the season. In all, Guice started six of LSU's 12 games, including the final three.

Fournette didn't even attend the Citrus Bowl, where Guice rushed for 138 yards, scored on a 70-yard run and a 1-yard reception, and earned MVP honors in the Tigers' 29-9 victory over Louisville.

It was a fitting conclusion to a star-making season in which Guice led SEC running backs in rushing yards (1,387), rushing touchdowns (15) and average per carry (7.6). Eight of his rushing touchdowns covered at least 20 yards, and five were at least twice that long.

He twice rushed for more than 250 yards in a game.

If there was disappointment, it came in having his 200-yard rushing games occur on the road, thus depriving many Baton Rougeans of seeing their hometown hero accomplish his feats in Tiger Stadium.

Guice grew up only miles away from the structure that towers over the nearby Mississippi River, but it might as well have been a world away, given the disparity between hope and despair, privilege and poverty.

Compounding it all was having his father murdered in a local restaurant when he was seven years old.

Guice eventually attended Baton Rouge's Catholic High School, where he received scholarship aid but found himself in the midst of students who came from more affluent backgrounds and couldn't appreciate his perspective on life.

Like fellow alumnus and former NFL standout Warrick Dunn, whose mother was murdered while he was in high school, Guice relied on the kindness of others to help him make it through. Coaches and mentors, often acting as surrogate father figures, often gave Guice rides to school. If not, he found a way to get there on his own.

His mother worked various jobs to support Guice, two brothers, a third that came later, and to cover the remainder of the tuition that had to be paid.

Two days before LSU played Alabama last season, Guice's brother, Derrick, who bears his father's name, was booked into East Baton Rouge Parish Prison. The counts against him included being a principal to aggravated criminal damage to property and attempted second-degree murder.

As a boy, Derrius was caught shoplifting at 14 and spent a night in juvenile detention. But he is intent on making the right choices, because he has seen too many bad choices. Including from his brother.

That's the crossroads at which Derrius stands as a promising 2017 season beckons — running away from what he has seen in a tough past and running toward a bright (and lucrative) future that he does not want to jeopardize.

Which brings us back to football.

In a season of change at LSU, Guice should be even better than last year, given his bigger role from start to finish. All-American? Heisman?

"I'm just trying to learn this new offense and grind and go hard out there with my brothers," he said. "It's still about us, having that dog and fight in us."

GUICE GAME BY GAME IN 2016

DATE	OPPONENT	RUSH	YDS	TDS
SEPT. 3	VS. WISCONSIN	2	3	0
SEPT. 10	JACKSONVILLE STATE	19	155	1
SEPT. 17	MISSISSIPPI STATE	5	19	0
SEPT. 24	AT AUBURN	3	62	0
OCT. 1	MISSOURI	17	163	3
OCT. 15	SOUTHERN MISS	16	162	2
OCT. 22	OLE MISS	16	57	1
NOV. 5	ALABAMA	2	8	0
NOV. 12	AT ARKANSAS	21	252	2
NOV. 19	FLORIDA	19	83	1
NOV. 24	AT TEXAS A&M	37	285	4
DEC. 31	VS. LOUISVILLE	26	138	1
TOTAL		183	1,387	15

KNOW HIS NAME

New Offensive Coordinator is an X-Factor for Alabama

BY DENNIS DODD | Photo by Marvin Gentry-USA TODAY Sports

Alabama's new offensive coordinator is 41, bald and could pass for your neighbor down the block with the noisy pressure washer. Flashy, he ain't.

Low profile might be a good look for Brian Daboll right about now, considering it would be damn near impossible for him to be more high profile than his predecessors.

When the former New England Patriots' tight ends coach was hired in February, he was the Tide's third offensive coordinator in two months. Lane Kiffin left to be head coach at Florida Atlantic just before the national title game. Steve Sarkisian went to the Atlanta Falcons after the championship game.

Hiring Chip Kelly would have gotten the blood flowing quicker. Current Bama staffer Mike Locksley would have been a fine choice.

Daboll is not your basic Celebu-coach, but Alabama doesn't need any more of those at this point.

"The first couple of days weren't necessarily perfect," tailback Damien Harris said of the transition to Daboll.

They will have to be, quickly. That's

what the job demands. This is Alabama. Low profile doesn't last long. Being on the sidelines, calling plays within range of Nick Saban's death stare, is the most highly visible coordinator position in all of college football.

Who is this Daboll guy, anyway?

He leaves an NFL team where it's hard to know any of the coaches in a meaningful way and joins a program where it's equally difficult to know any of the coaches in a meaningful way. Saban adopted Bill Belichick's "One Voice" approach to the media long ago.

This we know: Daboll knows success.

A former Division III safety from Canada, Daboll has been a part of five Patriots' Super Bowl victories. Saban went with a guy who hasn't been in the college game since 1999. Does it even matter with Belichick vouching for him?

If this was (perhaps) *any* other program, we'd be wondering why Saban is going on his sixth offensive coordinator in 11 seasons, or why Daboll is his third OC in three games.

Not in T-Town. Trust The Process and all that.

Daboll inherits the vast potential of the Alabama attack, led by sophomore quarterback Jalen Hurts. It's not exactly a generation gap, but it's worth mentioning: Hurts was being born the last time Daboll was a college coach — as a graduate assistant at Michigan State for Saban in 1998-1999.

When Saban moved on to LSU, he helped Daboll get a job with his old friend Belichick. Daboll was hired as a Patriots' defensive assistant, then promoted to receivers coach in 2002. He later went on to spend four seasons as an NFL offensive coordinator (Chiefs, Dolphins, Browns).

Now, he's at Alabama. At its heart, this is still a power-running offense.

"When he (Daboll) first came," tight end Miller Forristall told reporters, "everybody was wondering who this guy is. You know his past experiences. But he's here now and he trusts us and we trust him a lot."

This will be good news for those always on Kiffin: Daboll likes to run the ball. Not that he would have a lot of choice in the matter, working for Saban.

There will be plenty of guys to carry the ball at Alabama this season. Damien Harris, Bo Scarbrough and Josh Jacobs could easily start at any other school. At Alabama, they're likely to share time with sophomore B.J. Emmons.

And there's still the potential of five-star recruit Najee Harris to consider.

In the spring game, Hurts and early enrollee Tua Tagovailoa combined for 614 passing yards. Tantalizing, yes? Don't expect an aerial show. Hurts — assuming he keeps the starting job — needs to get better at reading defenses and working on his deep throws.

The most amazing aspect of 2016 remains Hurts assimilating himself into the offense while winning an SEC title and playing for a national championship.

Not bad for a freshman.

Daboll's most important charge will be getting Hurts to the next level.

"We jelled really quick," Hurts said. "He came by to visit one day and came right up to me. He told me how he does things, what his intentions were."

NFL quarterbacks who played for Daboll include Matt Cassel, Matt Moore and Colt McCoy. Zzzzzz. ... Oh, and a guy named Tom. If Hurts was curious about exactly what Daboll's intentions were with this offense, the answer came via periodic FaceTime hook-ups with Brady.

"We're running some of the same stuff they ran, so (Daboll) will call him and ask Tom Brady what his top-five plays are," Hurts told reporters earlier this year. "It's cool because we're running the same plays he's ran."

That's nice, but someone has to say it out loud: Can Daboll recruit and coach at possibly the most elite college program in existence, one that has been called the NFL's 33rd franchise?

Obviously, Saban thinks so, but the answer isn't as simple as saying Daboll has coached with the NFL's most elite team. We're talking play-calling and game-planning at the college level. We're talking stuff you can't quantify.

In the past three years, Daboll was tight ends coach for the Patriots, which is saying he was *the* Rob Gronkowski's coach. But doesn't that position kind of coach itself?

And Daboll's previous NFL coordinator experience? His units never finished above 22nd in the league in total yards.

Kiffin was/is a hell of a coach. That's why Daboll cannot be assumed to be an automatic upgrade.

As much as you might want to disparage him, Kiffin successfully guided (in some fashion) a major transition to the spread offense at Alabama.

Daboll inherits a lot of that legacy. And none of its headaches.

Maybe that's all that matters.

We'll soon find out.

At Alabama, there's nowhere for Daboll to hide.

Photo by Marvin Gentry-USA TODAY Sports

NEW WAVE OF QBS HELPS SEC RETURN TO TOP

BY ANTHONY GIMINO | Photos by USA TODAY Sports

The SEC likes to think of itself as above it all, better than every other conference, immune to the time-tested laws of college football.

It's not.

If you ain't got the quarterbacks, you ain't going to be great.

SEC fans might be putting their hands over their ears because they don't want to hear it, but the SEC wasn't the best conference in the land last season.

The ACC (Clemson) won the national title over Alabama.

The ACC (Louisville quarterback Lamar Jackson) won the Heisman. No SEC player was in the top six. No SEC offensive player cracked the top 10.

The SEC's second-highest rated team at the end of the season was LSU, all the way down at No. 13.

With everyone not named Alabama taking a collective face-plant, blame the quarterback play.

Ole Miss senior Chad Kelly was supposed to be the flag-bearer, but he ended up missing the final three games and not living up to the standards of his junior season. Senior Joshua Dobbs did what he could, but it wasn't enough to get Tennessee over the hump in a season of high expectations. LSU's Brandon Harris lost his starting job and then transferred. Trevor Knight was merely OK in his one season at Texas A&M after transferring from Oklahoma.

Ready for the good news?

The SEC is totally reloading with talented sophomores, second-year starters expected to make big improvement and at least a couple of big-time newcomers likely to grab starting roles.

Let's start with the super sophomores.

Alabama's Jalen Hurts is the class of the class, winning the SEC Offensive Player of the Year award. He wasn't great in the playoff against the wicked defenses of Washington and Clemson — a combined 20 of 44 for 188 yards — but don't let that distract you from his season total of 954 yards rushing and perfectly acceptable 139.1 passing efficiency rating.

During the spring, coach Nick Saban listed Hurts' get-better priorities as: "Decision making. Getting the ball out of his hand more quickly. Not looking at the rush. Not drifting in the pocket. Reading and having his eyes in the right place, relative to the coverage and the read that particular read has.

"I think he's doing a much better job in that regard."

With Hurts leading the way, not many conferences have a group of sophomore slingers like this:

• Shea Patterson of Ole Miss was the top QB recruit in the 2016 class and played to good reviews when he got his feet wet in the final three games of the season after Kelly was injured, debuting with a victory over Texas A&M. He's a run-pass threat with the right mix of composure and cockiness.

"I don't know if he's changed a lot as a person," Ole Miss coach Hugh Freeze said this spring. "He had the same confidence when he was called upon to go in against A&M."

• Jacob Eason of Georgia was the No. 2 quarterback in the 2016 class, and ended up jumping into the starting lineup for all but one game last season. His ability to be consistent lagged behind his obvious physical skills in an up-and-down season for Eason and the Dawgs.

Florida coach Jim McElwain, whose team beat the Bulldogs last season, saw enough of Eason last season. He called the youngster "the future of the SEC."

• Jake Bentley of South Carolina started the final seven games of 2016 and completed 65.8 percent of his passes. The Gamecocks lost, 46-39, in overtime to South Florida in the Birmingham Bowl, but the true freshman's career-high 390 passing yards served as further optimism for 2017.

• Jarrett Stidham of Auburn is a sophomore newcomer to the SEC who impressed in spring practice, not just as a potential starter but as a possible difference-maker. He showed flashes of greatness in a brief stint at Baylor.

Meanwhile, Florida very well could go young, too, in its still-continuing quest for an answer at quarterback. In a somewhat laughable manner, the Gators' passing game actually has improved in each of the past five years, going from 114th nationally in 2012, to 107th to 104th to 87th to 79th.

If redshirt freshman Feleipe Franks, the spring leader, can avoid turnovers and deliver the deep ball, Florida might finally have an answer at QB for the next few years.

The SEC has only three projected senior starting quarterbacks — LSU's Danny Etling, Kentucky's Stephen Johnson and Arkansas' Austin Allen — all hoping to make significant improvement in their second seasons as the starter.

Missouri's Drew Lock, back for his third season as a starter, passed for 3,399 yards last season. Of the top 13 passing leaders in the conference, just three are gone. Tennessee and Texas A&M are the only schools that will have to turn to relative newbies (given that Florida still has Luke Del Rio).

Collectively, the SEC passed for 223.95 yards per game last season, 57 yards behind teams from the pass-happy, quarterback-rich Big 12. The SEC was 31 passing yards behind the Pac-12, the "Conference of Quarterbacks." The SEC trailed the ACC by 22 yards.

Yes, of course, the SEC has great defenses, which helps explain the disparity, but not all of it. The league's quarterbacks were too young, too inexperienced, too not good.

It happens. Call it a down cycle.

The SEC certainly has nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to quarterback history; seven started in the first week of the 2016 NFL season, more than any other conference.

Now, there's a new QB wave in town. And there's a promising newer wave rolling in, too. Alabama true freshman Tua Tagovailoa and Georgia's Jake Fromm each pushed incumbent starting sophomores in the spring. Early-enrolled freshman Kellen Mond is part of a three-way race at A&M.

Now it's time for other conferences to put their hands over their ears. They might not want to hear this: The SEC is back in the quarterback business.

Which means it could be back to being, unquestionably, the best.

SEC'S PROJECTED QB STARTERS

TEAM	QB	YR.	COMMENT
Alabama	Jalen Hurts	So.	Plenty of room to grow after being SEC Offensive POY.
Arkansas	Austin Allen	Sr.	One of two SEC QBs with more than 3,000 yards in '16.
Auburn	Jarrett Stidham	So.	12 TDs, 2 INTs in 109 passes at Baylor in 2015.
Florida	Feleipe Franks	Fr.	Veteran Luke Del Rio returns from injury in the fall.
Georgia	Jacob Eason	So.	Had two 300-yard outings in SEC play last season.
Kentucky	Stephen Johnson	Sr.	JC transfer took over last season, led Cats to 7-4 finish.
LSU	Danny Etling	Sr.	A don't-mess-it-up kind of QB; rely on the ground game.
Mississippi State	Nick Fitzgerald	Jr.	Not a bad Dak replacement; 3,798 yards of total offense.
Missouri	Drew Lock	Jr.	Has 4,731 passing yards in past two seasons.
Ole Miss	Shea Patterson	So.	Very quickly has become the face of the program.
South Carolina	Jake Bentley	So.	Highly efficient in late-season wins over Tennessee, Mizzou.
Tennessee	Quinten Dormady	Jr.	Still battling redshirt freshman Jarrett Guarantano.
Texas A&M	TBA		Little clarity among Jake Hubenak, Nick Starkel, Kellen Mond.
Vanderbilt	Kyle Shurmur	Jr.	More comfort this spring after passing for 2,409 yards.

ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

For more coverage of the Crimson Tide, visit alabama.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Daboll **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Jeremy Pruitt **STADIUM:** Bryant-Denny Stadium: 101,821

EVEN AT NO. 1 ALABAMA, IT'S ALL ABOUT IMPROVEMENT

On just about any other team, having only three quarterbacks who have combined to play just one year of college football would be a huge concern.

But this is Alabama and that player with a year of experience is Jalen Hurts, who as a true freshman was named the SEC Offensive Player of the Year. He also led Alabama to the national championship game, where it took Clemson's last-second touchdown to keep the Crimson Tide from defending its title.

Continuing Hurts' development will be crucial to Alabama's chances this year, especially since the downfield passing game struggled near the end of the 2016 season and the Crimson Tide is loaded at the playmaker positions. It's become the top priority of new offensive coordinator Brian Daboll, who had been an offensive coordinator for three NFL teams and most recently was the tight ends coach for the New England Patriots.

True freshmen Tua Tagovailoa and Mac Jones will immediately step into backup roles, but the flip side to all the new faces is that Alabama has a returning starting quarterback for the first time since AJ McCarron left in 2013.

"Because we do have a starting quarterback coming back, it's easier for us to self-assess what we need to do for him, with him, to help him, to coach him so that he can develop in areas that would be helpful to him becoming even more of a complete player — mostly in the passing game," coach Nick Saban said.

"If he could do that and be sort of a dual-threat guy, I think it would be really, really difficult for defenses to defend him."

After beating out three more experienced quarterbacks to start last season (they have all since transferred), Hurts completed 240 of 382 passes (62.8 percent) for 2,780 yards, with 23 touchdowns and nine interceptions. He also ran 191 times for 954 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Getting Hurts to not tuck-and-run so much, and stay in the pocket more, has been an offseason priority, in hopes of raising his passer rating of 139.1, which ranked 44th in the nation. Even for Alabama — *Lindy's* preseason No. 1 team — there is room for improvement.

OFFENSE

Alabama's biggest question on offense heading into the fall will be right tackle, where no one was able to secure the job during the spring.

The other four line spots are pretty much set with sophomore Jonah Williams moving from right tackle to left, junior Ross Pierschbacher at left guard, senior Bradley Bozeman at center and junior Lester Cotton, who can play either right guard or right tackle.

Sophomore Matt Womack spent the most time in the spring at right tackle, but true freshman Alex Leatherwood was right behind him in reps with the second unit. The early enrollee might be the one to watch when fall camp opens.

Regardless, Alabama has size and depth, so don't be surprised if the coaches continue to experiment when training camp opens in August.

Replacing O.J. Howard at tight end won't be easy, but junior Hale Hentges is an established veteran, and sophomore Miller Forristall is set to be the H-back. Redshirt freshman Irv Smith is a player to keep an eye on, and junior Ronnie Clark has moved from running back after having some injury issues.

Alabama is absolutely loaded in the backfield.

Junior Damien Harris is coming off a 1,000-yard season and junior Bo Scarbrough had a jaw-dropping postseason before suffering a leg fracture. There are also sophomores Josh Jacobs and B.J. Emmons, and true freshmen Najee Harris and Brian Robinson. Some recruiting services hailed Harris as being the top recruit in the nation. —

"We'll be at practice and I kind of look back and it's like, 'We've got this many guys?'" Harris said. "There's a lot of talented guys, a lot of guys that are ready to work hard."

The wide receivers are comparable, although without the same kind of depth (at least yet). The group features another 1,000-yard performer, junior Calvin Ridley, while senior Robert Foster is looking to rebound in a big way after winning a starting

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	vs. Florida State (Atlanta, GA)	10-3
Sept. 9	FRESNO STATE	1-11
Sept. 16	COLORADO STATE	7-6
Sept. 23	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Sept. 30	OLE MISS	5-7
Oct. 7	at Texas A&M	8-5
Oct. 14	ARKANSAS	7-6
Oct. 21	TENNESSEE	9-4
Nov. 4	LSU	8-4
Nov. 11	at Mississippi State	6-7
Nov. 18	MERCER	6-5
Nov. 25	at Auburn	8-5

RESULTS

	14-1, 8-0	
W	vs. USC (Arlington, TX)	52-6
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	38-10
W	at Ole Miss	48-43
W	KENT STATE	48-0
W	KENTUCKY	34-6
W	at Arkansas	49-30
W	at Tennessee	49-10
W	TEXAS A&M	33-14
W	at LSU	10-0
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	51-3
W	CHATTANOOGA	31-3
W	AUBURN	30-12
	SEC Championship Game	
W	vs. Florida	54-16
	Peach Bowl - Semifinal	
W	vs. Washington	24-7
	National Championship Game	
L	vs. Clemson	31-35

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

2016:
14-1 overall, 8-0 SEC (1st, West)

COACH:
Nick Saban — At Alabama: 114-19, 10 years; overall: 205-61-1, 21 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jalen Hurts, RB Bo Scarbrough, WR Calvin Ridley, OT Jonah Williams, DL Da'Ron Payne, LB Rashaan Evans, DB Minkah Fitzpatrick, S Ronnie Harrison

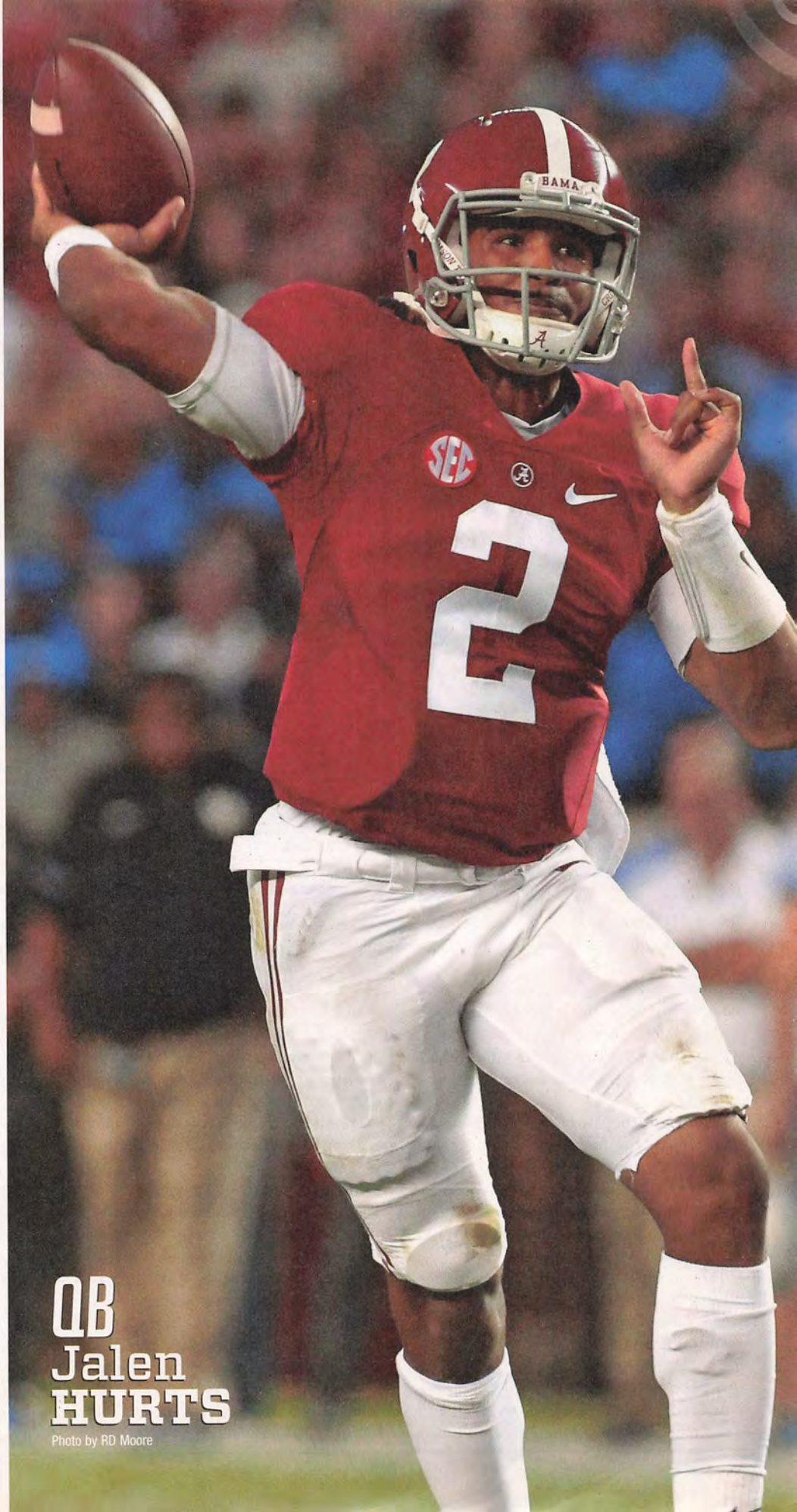
PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Even though Alabama had a monster draft, the overall talent level hasn't dropped off. There's a former five-star recruit at every position group except tight end, with the Tide featuring impressive depth at running back and linebacker, especially. Hurts should only be better after winning the SEC Offensive Player of the Year award.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The right side of the offensive line is unsettled. There are some depth concerns at cornerback and quarterback, where Alabama only has three on scholarship with a combined one year of experience. Alabama will have a number of new starters in key positions.

KEY LOSSES:
WR ArDarius Stewart, TE O.J. Howard, LT Cam Robinson, DE Jonathan Allen, DL Dalvin Tomlinson, LB Reuben Foster, LB Ryan Anderson, LB Tim Williams, CB Marlon Humphrey, S Eddie Jackson

OVERVIEW:
Alabama had so much talent last year that it nearly won the national championship with a true freshman at quarterback. The last-second 35-31 loss to Clemson still stings and is serving as offseason motivation. The Crimson Tide will be heavily favored to win a fourth straight SEC title and reach the College Football Playoff. This is the team to beat once again.

KEY NUMBER:
18 The number of former five-star recruits on the Crimson Tide roster, according to the 247Sports Composite. Alabama actually has more consensus five-star talents than players rated below four-star status.



QB
Jalen
HURTS
Photo by RD Moore

CB

Minkah Fitzpatrick

Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Jalen Hurts***	So.	Named SEC Offensive Player of the Year as a freshman.	Tua Tagovailoa, Fr.
RB	**Damien Harris***	Jr.	Coming off a 1,000-yard season, but has a lot behind him.	Bo Scarbrough, Jr.
WR	**Calvin Ridley***	Jr.	Worked hard in offseason after having a bit of production dip.	Jerry Jeudy, Fr.
WR	Robert Foster	Sr.	His potential has never been in doubt; could have huge season.	T.J. Simmons, So.
WR	Cam Sims	Sr.	Having 6-5 WR in the slot will cause matchup problems.	Xavian Marks, Jr.
TE	Hale Hentges	Jr.	Played in all 15 games last season, mostly as a blocker.	Miller Forristall, So.
LT	**Jonah Williams***	So.	Slid over from RT, where he was a Freshman All-American.	Matt Womack, So.
LG	**Ross Pierschbacher***	Jr.	Alabama tried him at C last year, but moved him back.	Josh Casher, Jr.
C	**Bradley Bozeman***	Sr.	Could be a Rimington Trophy candidate this season.	J.C. Hassenauer, Sr.
RG	Lester Cotton	Jr.	Can also play RT, but the guess here is he plays inside.	Deonte Brown, Fr.
RT	Alex Leatherwood	Fr.	Didn't play first-team in spring, but is one to watch in fall.	Elliott Baker, Jr.
PK	Joseph Bulovas	Fr.	Is expected to enroll over the summer.	JK Scott, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Da'Shawn Hand	Sr.	Has patiently waited his turn to start.	Quinnen Williams, Fr.
DT	**Da'Ron Payne***	Jr.	Clogging up the rushing lanes begins with Payne.	Raekwon Davis, So.
DE	Josh Frazier	Sr.	Could be this year's version of Dalvin Tomlinson.	Isaiah Buggs, Jr.
LB	Christian Miller	Jr.	Might be defense's biggest breakout candidate.	Ben Davis, Fr.
LB	**Shaun Dion Hamilton***	Sr.	Coming off an ACL tear, he didn't play in the spring.	Mack Wilson, So.
LB	Rashaan Evans	Sr.	Stepped in well for Hamilton during the playoff games.	Keith Holcombe, Jr.
LB	Anfernee Jennings	So.	Worked way into deep rotation last year.	Terrell Hall, So.
CB	**Anthony Averett***	Sr.	Fastest player on the team should only be better.	Tony Brown, Sr.
CB	Trevon Diggs	So.	The surprise of the spring after moving from wide receiver.	Levi Wallace, Sr.
SS	**Minkah Fitzpatrick***	Jr.	Returning All-American can play anywhere in secondary.	Hootie Jones, Sr.
FS	**Ronnie Harrison***	Jr.	Maybe the hardest hitter on the defense.	Deionte Thompson, So.
P	**J.K. Scott***	Sr.	Pencil him in as Ray Guy Award finalist after last year's snub.	Brannon Satterfield, Jr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

job in 2015, only to suffer a season-ending injury. Alabama likes to put 6-5 senior Cam Sims in the slot.

There's also early enrollee Jerry Jeudy, who was named the MVP of Alabama's A-Day, plus sophomore T.J. Simmons had a good spring. Prize recruits Devonta Smith and Henry Ruggs III will arrive during the summer.

The more they work with sophomore Jalen Hurts, the better the passing game should be, especially attacking downfield. It wasn't a coincidence that Alabama's spring scrimmages featured some deep throws, especially evident during the nationally televised A-Day.

"Obviously we came into the spring focusing on the passing game, and I think we've gotten better in that area. In all areas, really," Hurts said.

Consequently, the biggest concern at quarterback is depth. Behind Hurts, the Crimson Tide will have true freshmen Tua Tagovailoa and Mac Jones. The left-handed Tagovailoa passed for more than 300 yards against the second-team defense on A-Day.

DEFENSE

Alabama's defense is replacing defensive linemen Jonathan Allen and Dalvin Tomlinson, linebackers Reuben Foster, Ryan Anderson and Tim Williams, cornerback Marlon Humphrey and safety Eddie Jackson. Yet the Crimson Tide is near-certain to have one of the best defenses in the country — again.

With returning All-American Minkah Fitzpatrick going back to safety, the secondary has a veteran look to it for the first time in years. Almost every player — except in the nickel and dime packages — is either a junior or senior, with senior Anthony Averett at cornerback, Fitzpatrick and junior Ronnie Harrison at safety, plus senior Tony Brown and senior Hootie Jones the extra defenders.

That leaves sophomore Trevon Diggs, who moved from wide receiver to cornerback in the spring and has the athleticism and height (6-2) Saban loves at the position.

At linebacker, Alabama has seniors Shaun Dion Hamilton and Rashaan Evans set on the interior, Christian Miller ready to be a real force in the pass rush and Anfernee Jennings at the other outside spot. Behind them are the likes of Mack Wilson, Ben Davis, Terrell Hall and Dylan Moses, among others. All are outstanding prospects vying for playing opportunities.

While there are some concerns about depth in the secondary, and the linebackers don't have the most experience, both issues apply to the defensive line. How the group develops could key Alabama's defensive success this season.

Junior defensive tackle Da'Ron Payne is the lone returning starter, and senior defensive end Da'Shawn Hand is ready to step into a bigger role.

After them, though, is where things get interesting.

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Calvin Ridley WR 6-1 190 4.50 Jr.

With its perennial collection of former five-star recruits and future first-round picks, picking just one ... or five ... or 10 ... NFL prospects to highlight for Alabama is a challenge in itself. But Ridley is a worthy candidate.

As a 21-year old true freshman two years ago, Ridley literally was a man among boys, breaking Amari Cooper's all-time freshman record at Alabama with 1,045 receiving yards and seven touchdowns on a team-leading 89 receptions. Ridley's production slipped last season (72-769-7) as the Tide rolled with raw but gifted freshman quarterback Jalen Hurts. Just like Cooper, the game seems to come easy for Ridley as he accelerates smoothly, shifting gears on the fly to ruin pursuit angles and extend, catching and securing the ball in one fluid motion. When given the opportunity, he has shown terrific body control, timing and hand-eye coordination to win contested passes.

His development as a route-runner and downfield blocker in Alabama's pro-style offense should only make his transition to the NFL that much easier.

2. Minkah Fitzpatrick	CB	6-1	201	4.52	Jr.
3. Tony Brown	CB	6-0	198	4.38	Sr.
4. DaShawn Hand	DE	6-4	282	4.74	Sr.
5. DaRon Payne	DT	6-2	308	5.38	Jr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

Photo by RD Moore

Josh Frazier has experience. Sophomore Raekwon Davis, at 6-7, 303, has size. The coaching staff is high on junior college transfer Isaiah Buggs, who has a strong work ethic but still has a way to go in figuring out what's expected of him on any given down.

"He's very raw," senior center Bradley Bozeman said. "He's a good player. He's continued to grow as he's been in this program. As the season comes around, I think he'll be really ready."

Redshirt freshman Quinnen Williams is another strong candidate for the rotation.

"With the entire D-line, with the entire D-line unit, it's just cool because there's a lot of young guys stepping up, and I think we still have two more coming in this summer," Hand said. "As a unit, we just always want to be dominant."

Two who were set to arrive over the summer were top prospects LaBryan Ray and Phidarian Mathis, although Alabama hasn't had too many defensive linemen make a big impact during their initial seasons.

But you can't rule anything out as Alabama figures out how to deploy its new wave of superstars.

"It's either go hard or go home," Buggs said.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The only returning staple is senior punter JK Scott, who will be one of the favorites for the Ray Guy Award, given to the college football's best punter. He was a finalist in 2015, and last season he averaged 47.2 yards per attempt to rank third in the nation and second in the SEC. He had seven punts of at least 60 yards, despite not having too many opportunities as the Crimson Tide didn't punt very often.

True freshman Joseph Bulovas is expected to challenge for all kicking responsibilities when he arrives over the summer, and long-snapper Thomas Fletcher enrolled early. Alabama will have a lot of talented players on all the special-team units, with sophomore Trevon Diggs the leading candidate to return kicks and punts.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The season-opening matchup against Florida State at the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta on Sept. 2 could be — depending on how the AP and coaches polls shake out — the first No. 1 vs. No. 2 game in a season-opener for both teams.

The Florida State game will have season-long ripples, with the losing team facing little margin of error. The rest of Alabama's schedule is favorable, with nearly all of its toughest opponents at home ... well, at least until you get to the end when the Tide goes to Auburn for the Iron Bowl.

Cross-division games are Tennessee and Vanderbilt, neither of which should be a problem. Ole Miss often is, but the Rebs come to Tuscaloosa this season. So does LSU and Arkansas.

— Christopher Walsh

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.9	15
Rushing	206.6	35
Passing	277.9	28
Total	484.5	17
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.4	6
Rushing	102.4	4
Passing	226.0	58
Total	328.4	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 2	-0.1	T-71

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.1	30
Rushing	199.9	32
Passing	227.1	62
Total	427.1	45
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	15.1	3
Rushing	75.7	1
Passing	200.6	30
Total	276.3	3
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 10	+ 0.67	T-21

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	38.8	16
Rushing	245.0	12
Passing	210.3	87
Total	455.3	34
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	13.0	1
Rushing	63.9	1
Passing	197.9	24
Total	261.8	2
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 10	+ 0.67	17

NOTEBOOK

Between early enrollees and junior college transfers, Alabama had 16 new players on hand for spring practice, easily the most ever in program history.

Among them were running back **Najee Harris**, wide receiver **Jerry Jeudy**, tackle **Alex Leatherwood**, linebacker **Dylan Moses** and quarterback **Tua Tagovailoa**, who were all considered consensus five-star recruits, as was defensive end **LaBryan Ray** (a summer arrival).

The newcomers were quick to make their mark during Alabama's A-Day, the final scrimmage of spring. Although they were facing the second-team defense, the leading passer (Tagovailoa, 315 yards), rusher (Harris, 70) and receiver (Jeudy, 134) were all true freshmen.

• Jeudy was named the A-Day game MVP after scoring two touchdowns (one on a deflection), even though he was on the losing side. Teammates are already comparing him to the Crimson Tide's other wide receiver from southern Florida, **Calvin Ridley**.

"Only thing different is probably Jerry Jeudy is a little bit taller than Calvin," senior wide receiver **Cam Sims** said. "That's it. They're both nightmares for a DB."

• Alabama was able to avoid major injuries during the spring, and coaches were cautious with those who were less than 100 percent. After suffering a fractured leg in the national championship game, running back **Bo Scarbrough** could have played on A-Day, but he was held out along with running back **Damien Harris** (foot), running back **B.J. Emmons** (foot), linebacker **Shaun Dion Hamilton** (knee) and defensive back **Jared Mayden** (hip).

Everyone but Harris wore a black no-contact jersey all spring.

• Alabama's players have been pretty tight-lipped about how the offense will be different with new coordinator **Brian Daboll** calling the plays. Two changes will be a more diverse passing attack and more throws to players out of the backfield.

"All those guys are guys who can make a contribution to our team, and we're looking for ways that we can use them," coach **Nick Saban** said about the deep group of running backs. Damien Harris and **Josh Jacobs** tied for the receptions lead among running backs last season with 14.

CRIMSON TIDE SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
2 Jalen Hurts	QB	6-2	214	So.	Channelview, TX
10 Mac Jones	QB	6-2	185	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
19 Montana Murphy	QB	6-3	205	So.	Southlake, TX
13 Tua Tagovailoa	QB	6-1	219	Fr.	Ewa Beach, HI
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
5 Ronnie Clark	RB	6-2	215	Jr.	Calera
6 B.J. Emmons	RB	6-0	219	So.	Morganton, NC
22 Najee Harris	RB	6-2	227	Fr.	Antioch, CA
34 Damien Harris	RB	5-11	216	Jr.	Richmond, KY
8 Josh Jacobs	RB	5-10	209	So.	Tulsa, OK
44 Avery Reid	RB	6-0	192	Jr.	Oneonta
24 Brian Robinson Jr.	RB	6-1	218	Fr.	Tuscaloosa
9 Bo Scarbrough	RB	6-2	232	Jr.	Northport
12 Chadarius Townsend	RB	6-0	192	Fr.	Tanner
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
1 Robert Foster	WR	6-2	196	Sr.	Monaca, PA
36 Mac Hereford	WR	6-2	215	So.	Birmingham
41 Chris Herring	WR	6-4	170	So.	Tuscaloosa
32 Swade Hutchinson	WR	6-3	189	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
4 Jerry Jeudy	WR	6-1	184	Fr.	Deerfield Beach, FL
38 Austin Johnson	WR	6-2	205	Jr.	Elba
81 Derek Kief	WR	6-4	204	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
85 Donnie Lee Jr.	WR	6-0	202	Sr.	Northport
31 Xavian Marks	WR	5-8	174	Jr.	Rosenberg, TX
37 Jonathan Rice	WR	6-4	215	Jr.	Madison
3 Calvin Ridley	WR	6-1	190	Jr.	Coconut Creek, FL
14 Tyrell Shavers	WR	6-6	209	Fr.	Lewisville, TX
16 T.J. Simmons	WR	6-2	202	So.	Pinson
17 Cam Sims	WR	6-5	205	Sr.	Monroe, LA
30 Daniel Skehan	WR	6-0	201	Sr.	Lancaster, PA
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
40 Giles Amos	TE	6-4	236	So.	Perry, GA
45 Hunter Bryant	TE	6-5	226	Sr.	Roswell, GA
87 Miller Forristall	TE	6-5	238	So.	Cartersville, GA
48 Sean Goodman	TE	6-1	234	So.	Madison
46 Joseph Harvey	TE	5-9	211	Sr.	Tyrone, GA
84 Hale Hentges	TE	6-5	251	Jr.	Jefferson City, MO
42 Jacob Parker	TE	6-1	226	Sr.	Meridianville
82 Irv Smith Jr.	TE	6-4	243	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
83 Cam Stewart	TE	6-8	251	So.	San Jose, CA
88 Major Tennison	TE	6-5	244	Fr.	Flint, TX
Offensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
78 Elliot Baker	OL	6-7	300	Jr.	San Francisco, CA
75 Bradley Bozeman	OL	6-5	314	Sr.	Roanoke
65 Deonte Brown	OL	6-4	350	Fr.	Decatur
67 Josh Casher	OL	6-1	291	Jr.	Mobile
66 Lester Cotton	OL	6-4	324	Jr.	Tuscaloosa
63 J.C. Hassenauer	OL	6-2	295	Sr.	Woodbury, MN
56 Brandon Kennedy	OL	6-3	298	So.	Wetumpka
76 Scott Lashley	OL	6-7	310	Fr.	West Point, MS
70 Alex Leatherwood	OL	6-6	327	Fr.	Pensacola, FL
79 Chris Owens	OL	6-3	309	Fr.	Arlington, TX
72 Richie Petitbon	OL	6-4	303	So.	Annapolis, MD
71 Ross Pierschbacher	OL	6-4	304	Jr.	Cedar Falls, IA
61 Jacob Probasco	OL	6-3	317	So.	Plainsboro, NJ
59 Dallas Warmack	OL	6-2	308	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
73 Jonah Williams	OL	6-5	301	So.	Folsom, CA
77 Matt Womack	OL	6-7	326	So.	Hernando, MS
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
49 Isaiah Buggs	DL	6-5	292	Jr.	Ruston, LA
99 Raekwon Davis	DL	6-7	303	So.	Meridian, MS
95 Johnny Dwight	DL	6-3	301	Jr.	Rochelle, GA
69 Joshua Frazier	DL	6-4	315	Sr.	Springdale, AR
9 Da'Shawn Hand	DL	6-4	282	Sr.	Woodbridge, VA
50 Vohn Keith Jr.	DL	6-2	248	Sr.	Mobile
90 Jamar King	DL	6-4	290	Sr.	Detroit, MI
94 Da'Ron Payne	DL	6-2	308	Jr.	Birmingham
58 Daniel Powell	DL	5-11	246	So.	Aliceville
91 O.J. Smith	DL	6-2	305	Jr.	Bossier City, LA
92 Quinnen Williams	DL	6-4	285	Fr.	Birmingham
95 Taylor Wilson	DL	6-0	274	So.	Huntington Beach, CA
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
31 Keaton Anderson	LB	6-1	196	So.	Florence
48 Mekhi Brown	LB	6-5	241	So.	Columbus, GA
1 Ben Davis	LB	6-4	235	Fr.	Gordo
32 Rashaan Evans	LB	6-3	234	Sr.	Auburn
24 Terrell Hall	LB	6-5	251	So.	Washington, DC
20 Shaun Dion Hamilton	LB	6-0	233	Sr.	Montgomery
42 Keith Holcombe	LB	6-4	230	Jr.	Tuscaloosa
33 Anfernee Jennings	LB	6-3	265	So.	Dadeville
40 Joshua McMillon	LB	6-3	241	So.	Memphis, TN
47 Christian Miller	LB	6-4	240	Jr.	Columbia, SC
6 Dylan Moses	LB	6-3	234	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
16 Jamey Mosley	LB	6-5	244	Jr.	Mobile
30 Mack Wilson	LB	6-2	231	So.	Montgomery
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
28 Anthony Averett	DB	6-0	185	Sr.	Woodbury, NJ
7 Tony Brown	DB	6-0	198	Sr.	Beaumont, TX
30 Ryan Burns	DB	6-0	214	So.	Dallas, GA
5 Shyheim Carter	DB	6-0	195	So.	Kentwood, LA
7 Trevon Diggs	WR	6-2	195	So.	Gaithersburg, MD
29 Minkah Fitzpatrick	DB	6-1	201	Jr.	Old Bridge, NJ
45 Bo Grant	DB	6-2	201	Sr.	Valley
15 Ronnie Harrison	DB	6-3	214	Jr.	Tallahassee, FL
19 Shawn Jennings	DB	6-1	223	Fr.	Dadeville
6 Hootie Jones	DB	6-2	215	Sr.	Monroe, LA
13 Nigel Knott	DB	5-11	183	Fr.	Madison, MS
21 Rogria Lewis	DB	5-11	196	Sr.	Birmingham
21 Jared Mayden	DB	6-0	197	So.	Sachse, TX
26 Kyriq McDonald	DB	5-11	194	Fr.	Madison
25 Xavier McKinney	DB	6-1	192	Fr.	Roswell, GA
37 Donavan Mosley	DB	5-10	188	Jr.	San Antonio, TX
23 Aaron Robinson	DB	6-1	185	So.	Deerfield Beach, FL
14 Deionte Thompson	DB	6-2	193	So.	Orange, TX
39 Levi Wallace	DB	6-0	181	Sr.	Tucson, AZ
3 Daniel Wright	DB	6-1	185	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
45 Thomas Fletcher	LS	6-2	220	Fr.	Georgetown, TX
52 Scott Meyer	SN	6-2	226	Fr.	Alpharetta, GA
92 Andy Pappanastos	PK	5-11	193	Sr.	Montgomery
53 Ryan Parris	SN	6-0	225	Jr.	Madison
98 Brannon Satterfield	P	6-2	214	Jr.	Austin, TX
15 JK Scott	P	6-6	204	Sr.	Denver, CO

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the defense:** "Hell yeah their defensive line is great again. But they don't have as much depth. When I look at the number of great players lost over the last three years, it's hard for anyone to lose that many. What cost Alabama in the national championship game is when (defensive back) Maurice Smith transferred to Georgia (as a graduate student before last season). When Bama had some injuries, they had to play Tony Brown and Hootie Jones in the secondary against Clemson, and they gave up a lot of big plays. That combination killed them."

• **On the running backs:** "Alabama is loaded again at running back. (Bo) Scarbrough will be a high NFL draft pick if he stays healthy. Damien Harris led the team with over 1,000 yards last year. Josh Jacobs showed flashes. B.J. Emmons could start for a lot of teams. And (true freshman) Najee Harris is a beast."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Hurts	15	139.1	240	382	9	62.8	2780	23	71	185.3
B. Barnett	3	189.5	11	19	0	57.9	219	2	52	73.0

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Stewart	12	54	864	16.0	8	71	72.0
C. Ridley	15	72	769	10.7	7	52	51.3
O.J. Howard	15	45	595	13.2	3	68	39.7

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Harris	15	146	1065	28	1037	7.1	2	73	69.1
J. Hurts	15	191	1161	207	954	5.0	13	60	63.6
B.Scarbrough	13	125	844	32	812	6.5	11	85	62.5

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: R. Foster 115, R. Harrison 86, J. Allen 69
Tackles for loss: R. Anderson 19, T. Williams 16, J. Allen 16
Sacks: J. Allen 10.5, R. Anderson 9, T. Williams 9
Interceptions: M. Fitzpatrick 6, four tied with 2, two tied with 1

247SPORTS CRIMSON TIDE RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Najee Harris, RB

Alabama continues its tradition of landing elite ball carriers with the addition of this 6-2, 225-pound prospect. The five-star recruit is not all power though, as he has the ability to make defenders miss in the open field and become a weapon in the passing attack.

Alex Leatherwood, OT

The 6-6, 327-pound mauler is expected to compete for a starting spot on Alabama's offensive line during his first season. The five-star recruit is one of the more college-ready lineman in the nation as he displays great power and technique. Leatherwood also has the versatility to play tackle or guard.

Dylan Moses, LB

The highly-touted linebacker is one of the most physically gifted prospects in the nation. The 6-3, 235-pound Moses was a running back early in his career and still possesses that elite speed. The five-star recruit is another that should see the field early for the Crimson Tide.

SLEEPER

Christopher Allen, LB

Hailing from the same city as Moses — Baton Rouge, La., — Allen was overshadowed by his classmate. However, the 6-4, 235-pound prospect is an elite playmaker in his own right. Allen has the potential to be the Crimson Tide's next great edge rusher in their 3-4 scheme.

2018 NEEDS

Alabama likely sees plenty of turnover in the defensive secondary and the defensive line after the season due to graduation and early entries into the NFL Draft. The Crimson Tide certainly needs to address both positions groups in the upcoming 2018 recruiting class.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

5★	4★	3★	2★
6	17	2	1

Committments	26
Average Stars	4.07
Total Stars	106
National Rank: 1	SEC: 1

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Chris Allen	LB	6-4	234	★★★★	Baton Rouge, LA	Southern Lab School
Ranked No. 57 player and No. 3 inside linebacker nationally and No. 2 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 82 tackles, including 14 tackles for loss, and six quarterback sacks as a senior.						
Elliot Baker	OL	6-7	295	★★★★	San Francisco, CA	City College of San Francisco
Participated in spring practice… 247Sports.com rated No. 1 junior college offensive tackle nationally.						
Markail Benton	LB	6-2	237	★★★★	Phenix City	Central
Ranked No. 7 outside linebacker nationally and No. 6 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 129 career tackles (70 solo), including 10 tackles for loss, and four quarterback sacks.						
Isaiah Buggs	DL	6-5	290	★★★★	Ruston, LA	Gulf Coast C.C.
Ranked No. 2 junior college player and No. 1 junior college defensive lineman by 247Sports.com… As a sophomore, had 75 tackles, including 10 tackles for loss, and 3.5 quarterback sacks.						
VanDarius Cowan	LB	6-4	226	★★★★	Palm Beach Gardens, FL	Palm Beach Gardens
247Sports.com rated No. 4 outside linebacker nationally and No. 15 player in Florida… Had 104 tackles, including 13 tackles for loss, seven quarterback sacks and four fumbles caused as a junior.						
Thomas Fletcher	LS	6-2	220	★★	Georgetown, TX	IMG Academy
Participated in spring practice… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… 247Sports.com rated No. 1 long snapper nationally.						
Najee Harris	RB	6-2	225	★★★★★	Antioch, CA	Antioch
Participated in spring practice… *Parade* All-American… Two-time *USA Today* All-American… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Ranked No. 3 player and No. 2 running back nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 7,948 career rushing yards.						
Kedrick James	TE	6-5	245	★★★	Waco, TX	La Vega
247Sports.com rated No. 12 tight end nationally… In final two seasons, helped team to 29-1 record and state championship in 2015.						
Jerry Jeudy	WR	6-1	175	★★★★★	Deerfield Beach, FL	Deerfield Beach
Played in Under Armour All-American Game…. 247Sports.com rated No. 3 wide receiver nationally and No. 5 player in Florida… As a senior, had 76 receptions for 1,054 yards and 15 touchdowns.						
Mac Jones	QB	6-2	185	★★★★	Jacksonville, FL	The Bolles School
Ranked No. 17 pro-style quarterback nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 1,532 yards passing and 29 touchdowns as a senior.						
Alex Leatherwood	OL	6-6	327	★★★★★	Pensacola, FL	Booker T. Washington
Parade All-American… Ranked No. 3 player and No. 2 offensive tackle nationally, and No. 1 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
Phidarian Mathis	DL	6-4	287	★★★★	Monroe, LA	Neville
247Sports.com rated No. 12 defensive tackle nationally… Played in Under Armour All-American game… As a senior, had 41 tackles, including 12 tackles for loss, and seven quarterback sacks.						
Kyriq McDonald	DB	5-11	190	★★★	Madison	James Clemens
247Sports.com rated No. 46 cornerback nationally and No. 21 player in Alabama… Had 66 tackles, including 12 tackles for loss, three interceptions and 11 passes broken up as a senior.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Xavier McKinney	DB	6-1	192	★★★★	Roswell, GA	Roswell
Ranked No. 6 safety and No. 54 player nationally and No. 6 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* Defensive Player of the Year… As a senior, had 82 tackles and seven interceptions.						
Dylan Moses	LB	6-3	235	★★★★★	Baton Rouge, LA	IMG Academy
Participated in spring practice… *Parade* All-American… *USA Today* All-American… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Ranked No. 2 outside linebacker and No. 32 player nationally by 247Sports.com.						
Kendall Randolph	OL	6-4	310	★★★★	Madison	Bob Jones
247Sports.com rated No. 12 offensive guard nationally and No. 9 player in Alabama... Played in U.S. Army All-American Game.						
LaBryan Ray	DL	6-5	275	★★★★★	Madison	James Clemens
Ranked No. 1 strongside defensive end and No. 26 player nationally and No. 1 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com... Played in Under Armour All-American Game... Had 99 tackles, including 19 tackles for loss, 11 quarterback sacks, and four passes broken up as a senior.						
Brian Robinson	RB	6-1	224	★★★★	Tuscaloosa	Hillcrest
247Sports.com rated No. 8 running back nationally and No. 6 player in Alabama... As a senior, had 990 yards rushing and 18 touchdowns.						
Henry Ruggs, III	WR	6-0	175	★★★★	Montgomery	Lee
Ranked No. 11 wide receiver and No. 77 player nationally and No. 2 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com... Played in U.S. Army All American Game… Had 38 receptions for 664 yards and 10 touchdowns as a senior.						
Tyrell Shavers	WR	6-6	202	★★★★	Lewisville, TX	Lewisville
247Sports.com rated No. 70 player nationally, and No. 12 wide receiver and No. 9 player in Texas… Had 27 receptions for 397 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior.						
Devonta Smith	WR	6-1	165	★★★★	Amite, LA	Amite
247Sports.com rated No. 9 wide receiver and No. 64 player nationally and No. 2 player in Louisiana... Played in U.S. Army All-American Game.						
Tua Tagovailoa	QB	6-1	215	★★★★★	Ewa Beach, HI	St. Louis
Gatorade Hawaii Player of the Year… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Ranked No. 1 dual-threat quarterback nationally and No. 1 player in Hawaii… Had 8,158 career yards passing and 84 touchdowns… Had 1,727 career yards rushing.						
Major Tennison	TE	6-5	240	★★★★	Flint, TX	Bullard
Participated in spring practice… 247Sports rated No. 11 tight end and No. 51 player in Texas… Had 27 receptions for 603 yards and eight touchdowns as a junior.						
Chadarius Townsend	ATH	6-0	190	★★★★	Tanner	Tanner
Ranked No. 7 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Two-time All-State… As a senior, had 1,245 yards passing and 13 touchdowns… Had 1,481 yards rushing and 22 touchdowns.						
Jedrick Wills	OT	6-5	318	★★★★	Lexington, KY	Lafayette
Ranked No. 7 offensive tackle and No. 34 player nationally and No. 1 player in Kentucky by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
Daniel Wright	DB	6-1	187	★★★★	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Boyd Anderson
Played in Under Armour All-American Game… 247Sports.com rated No. 19 safety nationally… Had 72 tackles and four interceptions as a junior.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Evans Primed For Huge Season — Just Ask Him

It was the kind of message on social media that makes University of Alabama sports information staffers cringe, but senior linebacker Rashaan Evans meant it as pure motivation.

"I'll win the Butkus Award," he tweeted on February 21, and then refused to take it down.

"I believe in that tweet and I'm going to keep it up for the rest of the season," said Evans, who feels like he has nothing to lose during his final season at Alabama.

Although the *Parade* All-American was considered a five-star recruit in the Class of 2014 — he was ranked No. 15 nationally by the 247Sports Composite — Evans didn't make his first career start until last season's College Football Playoff.

Filling in for injured starter Shaun Dion Hamilton alongside 2016 Butkus Award winner Reuben Foster, Evans made seven tackles against Washington and 11 more vs. Clemson in the title game.

Now he's considered a fixture beside Hamilton, but like returning All-American defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick, he is versatile enough to play anywhere in his position group.

Evans can go from the outside to the interior depending on the down and formation, and defensive coordinator Jeremy Pruitt has no problem using him as a pure pass-rusher either. When the coach played him out of position during Alabama's A-Day scrimmage, Evans quipped after his side lost: "They should have played me at quarterback."

Another defensive player Evans can strongly relate to is defensive lineman Da'Shawn Hand, a unanimous five-star prospect in the same signing class who heads into the 2017 season having played in 39 games. He's only now considered a starter.

"Both guys have made a significant contribution and played a lot of football around here," coach Nick Saban said. "We think both of them are really, really good players. I think both of them have responded well as starters this spring and starting to show some leadership."

LB

Rashaan Evans

Photo by Michael Wade

Evans has played in 41 games, which ironically makes him one of the most experienced players on the roster. He calls it "crazy" that his Crimson Tide years have gone by so fast, but with no regrets about his career or having to wait so long for his opportunity.

"All it does is build character," he said.

"You become unselfish. You become more about the team. And when you have that type of mindset, your individual success is going to come anyway. Those things I have learned here overall under Coach Saban."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/alabama

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB JALEN HURTS

Despite not starting Alabama's season-opener last year, Hurts set an Alabama record by being part of 36 touchdowns. His 3,734 total yards rank second on the Crimson Tide's single-season list. ... He went 13-1 as the starting quarterback, helping lead Alabama to the national title game. ... Hurts spent the offseason working on his passing and looked more comfortable in the pocket during the spring. ... Was a semifinalist for the Walter Camp Player of the Year award.

EMERGING STAR

RB BO SCARBROUGH

It's unfair to call anyone the next Derrick Henry, but Scarbrough (6-2, 232) is comparable physically. ... After being suspended for the first four games of the 2015 season due to an eligibility issue, Scarbrough had only 18 carries for 104 yards. He topped that total in each of Alabama's first two spring scrimmages. ... The plan is for Scarbrough and Damien Harris to split reps, but Crimson Tide fans are eager to see what the hometown player can do.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR JERRY JEUDY

There are a lot of players to consider as top newcomer, including RB Najee Harris, OT Alex Leatherwood, DE Isaiah Buggs and LB Dylan Moses, but Jeudy might be in the best position to make an immediate impact. ... Teammates describe him as being a Calvin Ridley clone, and not just because both hail from South Florida. ... Jeudy, who was ranked No. 21 in the 247Sports Composite rankings, looked great on A-Day, taking home MVP honors.

Birmingham –

Home of the nation's third largest pediatric medical facility

OUR TEAM INCLUDES the most inquiring minds, the most skilled hands and the most compassionate hearts in pediatric medicine. We recruit, train and retain the best and brightest medical professionals to care for our children.

1600 7TH AVENUE SOUTH
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35233
(205) 638-9100 ChildrensAL.org

Children's of Alabama®

Healthcare as amazing as their potential

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

For more coverage of the Razorbacks, visit arkansas.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Enos **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Paul Rhoads **STADIUM:** Reynolds Razorback Stadium: 72,000

RAZORBACKS PIN HOPES ON NEW-LOOK DEFENSE

After too many opponents ran rings around Arkansas' 4-3 defense last year, coach Bret Bielema promoted secondary coach Paul Rhoads to defensive coordinator. The head coach's instructions: Install the 3-4 as the Razorbacks' base defense.

The real tests for the new scheme loom when the games are played this fall, but it did pass muster in the spring.

"I think we are taking care of our perimeter better," Rhoads said.

"Containing the football and setting the edge. I think we have more people in position to run to the football. I think the kids are playing faster right now with arguably less to think about, less on their plate every snap. And I think a combination of those things are allowing us to play better defense than we did last year."

The 3-4 is designed to do best what the Hogs did least last year, said senior Karl Roesler, a conventional, but undersized defensive end last year who is now an outside linebacker.

"You stop the run outside first, which helps because we weren't doing so well on the edges as everyone knows," Roesler said. "I think it helps the outside stuff."

From the biggest nose tackle to the littlest linebackers, the new scheme earned thumbs-up reviews over last year's read-and-react scheme.

Senior 335-pound nose tackle Bijhon Jackson, on pace to graduate a semester early in December, prefers that any "reading" stay strictly in the academic realm.

"Mainly playing the backside A-gap, I really don't have to worry about getting reads like I did last year," Jackson said. "It will be easier to come and make some plays, I believe. Stuff that I don't have to worry about any more is going to help me be free and just worry about playing ball."

In last year's defense, Randy Ramsey (6-4, 228) was inserted as a change-of-pace, speed-rushing defensive end. Sometimes he spectacularly changed the pace, forcing three fumbles and making 5.5 tackles for loss.

Other times, those opposite 300-pound-plus offensive tackles mashed him like a potato.

As the hybrid outside linebacker/strong safety in the 3-4, Ramsey has room to operate he didn't have when lined up against those opposite behemoths in the 4-3.

"I don't have to be down there battling a lot of those guys, Ramsey said. "That's why I'm glad we changed to this 3-4. I'm playing in space now. A guy with my skill-set, it's kind of catering to the way I play."

OFFENSE

Last season's Arkansas anomaly could become this season's offensive strength.

A young offensive line that blocked well enough for running back Rawleigh Williams III to be among the SEC rushing leaders and for quarterback Austin Allen to lead the SEC in passing also failed to budge defenses for key pivotal yards goal-line and short-yardage runs.

Allen became a virtual punching bag, especially in the 56-3 embarrassment at Auburn and in several second-half meltdowns. The Razorbacks squandered leads of 24-7 (losing 28-24 at Missouri) and 24-0 (losing 35-24 to Virginia Tech in the Belk Bowl).

Offensive lines tend to get better with age. This line, led by senior All-America candidate center Frank Ragnow, got better this spring, according to Bielema and offensive coordinator Dan Enos.

"Our offensive line from last year to right now is night and day," Enos said during spring drills. "We could barely field two lines last year. We've got three lines right now that we feel good about."

The group includes tackles Colton Jackson, now a third-year sophomore, and fourth-year junior Brian Wallace.

One of the guards is Hjalte Froholdt, a junior from Denmark who didn't play American football until he was a high school exchange student. He then played defensive tackle until moving to offense in the spring of 2016, where he was immediately force-fed the position as a starter in the SEC.

The other guard is Johnny Gibson, a walk-on reserve promoted to starter at 2016 midseason.

Jackson, who was the starting right tackle last season until supplanted by Wallace, is at left tackle, replacing Dan Skipper, the lone graduating starting offensive lineman from 2016.

Jackson, even at 6-6, 300, doesn't have Skipper's size, nor his experience. But he does

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Aug. 31	vs. Florida A&M (Little Rock, AR)	4-7
Sept. 9	TCU	6-7
Sept. 23	vs. Texas A&M (Arlington, TX)	8-5
Sept. 30	NEW MEXICO STATE	3-9
Oct. 7	at South Carolina	6-7
Oct. 14	at Alabama	14-1
Oct. 21	AUBURN	8-5
Oct. 28	at Ole Miss	5-7
Nov. 4	COASTAL CAROLINA	10-2
Nov. 11	at LSU	8-4
Nov. 18	MISSISSIPPI STATE	6-7
Nov. 25	MISSOURI	4-8

RESULTS

7-6, 3-5		
W	LOUISIANA TECH	21-20
W	at TCU (OT)	41-38
W	TEXAS STATE	42-3
L	vs. Texas A&M (Arlington, TX)	24-45
W	ALCORN STATE	52-10
L	ALABAMA	30-49
W	OLE MISS	34-30
L	at Auburn	3-56
W	FLORIDA	31-10
L	LSU	10-38
W	at Mississippi State	58-42
L	at Missouri	24-28
	Belk Bowl	
L	vs Virginia Tech	24-35

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Fayetteville, Ark.

2016:
7-6 overall, 3-5 SEC (T-5th, West)

COACH:
Bret Bielema — At Arkansas: 25-26, 4 years; overall: 93-50, 11 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Austin Allen, RB Rawleigh Williams III, WR Jared Cornelius, C Frank Ragnow, DE McTelvin Agim, LB Dre Greenlaw, CB Ryan Pulley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Arkansas has a fifth-year senior incumbent quarterback, *Lindy's* top-rated center in the country, one of the SEC's 2016 leading rushers and an offensive line that should be improved by age. Switching from a 4-3 to 3-4 defense under new coordinator Paul Rhoads boosted morale on that side of the ball.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Four of the top five receivers graduated, as did the team's best tight end. Sure, the defense seems excited about the switch to the 3-4, but it's much the same cast that was repeatedly run over last season. The Hogs were last in the SEC in rushing defense.

KEY LOSSES:
WR Drew Morgan, WR Keon Hatcher, WR Dominique Reed, TE Jeremy Sprinkle, OT Dan Skipper, DE Deatrich Wise Jr., DE Jeremiah Ledbetter, DT Taiwan Johnson, LB Brooks Ellis, P Toby Baker

OVERVIEW:
Change was needed on defense, so Bielema made it. Perhaps that, and some added age in the right places — like the offensive line — will make the difference in some close games this season. There isn't much to separate the teams in the middle of the SEC West. One edge that Arkansas must put to good use is its senior quarterback.

KEY NUMBER:
5 Where Rawleigh Williams' 1,360 rushing yards rank on the school's single-season rushing list. Darren McFadden holds the top two spots at 1,830 and 1,647.

RB
Rawleigh WILLIAMS III

Photo by Matthew Visinsky/Icon Sportswire) via AP Images

QB

Austin Allen

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Austin Allen***	Sr.	One of SEC's best QBs; 61.1 percent completions in 2016.	Ty Storey, So.
RB	**Rawleigh Williams III***	Jr.	Rushed for 1,360 yards last season.	Devwah Whaley, So.
WR	Jared Cornelius	Sr.	By far the team's best wide receiver.	Brandon Martin, So.
WR	LaMichael Pettway	So.	Promising player who is inconsistent and inexperienced.	Jordan Jones, Fr.
WR	Deon Stewart	So.	Played little last year, but that's more than most returning WRs.	Jonathan Nance, Jr.
TE	Austin Cantrell	So.	The Hogs' best blocking TE and their most experienced.	Jack Kraus, Jr.
LT	Colton Jackson	So.	Arkansas banking on Jackson's potential at key spot.	Paul Ramirez, Sr.
LG	**Hjalte Froholdt***	Jr.	Too much was asked of him in 2016; he looks ready now.	Zach Rogers, Jr.
C	**Frank Ragnow***	Sr.	Everything lines up for an All-American kind of season.	Zach Rogers, Jr.
RG	Johnny Gibson	Jr.	Climbed out of spring doghouse; started five games last year.	**Jake Raulerson, Sr.***
RT	**Brian Wallace***	Jr.	Started the final 10 games of last season.	Jalen Merrick, So.
PK	**Cole Hedlund***	Jr.	Stats are OK, but he's been shaky in the clutch.	Connor Limpert, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	McTelvin Agim	So.	This is a pair of ends with potential.	Briston Guidry, Fr.
NT	Bijhon Jackson	Sr.	Both big men are solidly in Bret Bielema's big plans.	Austin Capps, So.
DE	Armon Watts	Jr.	An ongoing competition that will be resolved in August.	T.J. Smith, So.
LB	Karl Roesler	Sr.	Hybrid player finds a home at a new spot in the 3-4.	Jamario Bell, So.
LB	**Dre Greenlaw***	Jr.	Talented player (42 tackles in 7 games) must get, stay healthy.	Josh Harris, Jr.
LB	De'Jon Harris	So.	Stepped it up in the spring to put a hold on this spot.	Kyrei Fisher, Fr.
LB	Randy Ramsey	Jr.	Another hybrid player finds a 3-4 home.	Dwayne Eugene, Sr.
CB	**Ryan Pulley***	Jr.	Best returning starter backed by best nickel back.	Kevin Richardson II, Sr.
CB	**Henre Toliver***	Sr.	Toliver's experience and Tutt's return to health are big plusses.	Britto Tutt, So.
SS	De'Andre Coley	Sr.	Arkansas has two hard hitters at this position.	**Santos Ramirez, Jr.***
FS	**Josh Liddell***	Sr.	Experienced, interchangeable safeties.	De'Andre Coley, Sr.
P	Blake Johnson	So.	Hogs miss graduated Toby Baker.	Connor Limpert, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

have the quickness to potentially develop into a top-flight left tackle.

"Colton's got light feet," Bielema said. "He's a kid that's got a lot of ability and I think he just needs confidence."

Bielema loves to stockpile tight ends. Sophomore starter Austin Cantrell is the best blocker of the bunch. Sophomore Cheyenne O'Grady is the best pass-catcher.

Wide receivers, which was last year's deepest offensive position, now is the shallowest following the departure of four seniors. Only senior Jared Cornelius — who made 32 catches for 515 yards (including a 146-yard effort against Alabama) — returns as a proven wideout.

Third-year sophomores Deon Stewart and LaMichael Pettway were bit players last season who have bigger opportunities in 2017. Redshirt freshman Jordan Jones and highly touted, occasionally spectacular junior college transfer Brandon Martin, must be more consistent, said receivers coach Michael Smith.

If SEC-leading passer Austin Allen stays healthy, the Hogs are fine at quarterback. Same at running back. Williams was one of the SEC's leading rushers with 245 carries for 1,360 yards and 12 touchdowns. Devwah Whaley chipped in with 110 carries for 602 yards and three touchdowns.

DEFENSE

Changing the base defense from the 4-3 to the 3-4 doesn't really change the secondary. For Arkansas, that's a good thing. Continuity is a major plus for a secondary that was vastly improved in 2016 over 2015.

Key defensive backs return, including three interchangeable first-teamers for the two safety positions — seniors Josh Liddell and De'Andre Coley, and fourth-year junior Santos Ramirez. Also back are first-team cornerbacks Ryan Pulley and Henré Toliver.

Senior Kevin Richardson, who only played in the season-opener last year because of torn pectoral muscles, proved healthy in spring practice. He will be the top nickel back and a super-sub at corner and safety.

Even the coach is the same. Former Iowa State head coach Paul Rhoads is now coordinating the entire defense, but he's also still coaching the defensive backs.

"I felt with Paul coaching them a year ago, letting him still be the voice in the room was going to be ideal," Bielema said. "That's the one group on defense that has experience, has some moxie and they've been really stepping up."

Britto Tutt, a junior college transfer cornerback expected to help last year before tearing his ACL during camp, was healthy in spring ball and ready to contribute.

The four linebacker positions don't match the secondary's continuity. Two positions are new. There is an outside linebacker spot that Bielema calls Hog, for the heavier defensive end/outside linebacker hybrid. And there is Razor, made for a strong safety/outside linebacker hybrid.

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Frank Ragnow	**C**	**6-5**	**319**	**5.28**	**Sr.**

Bret Bielema's ability to recruit and develop NFL-caliber offensive linemen was not lost when he left Wisconsin to join the SEC, luring Ragnow — a Minnesota native — to the Razorbacks.

The powerfully-built Ragnow saw immediate playing time at center as a true freshman and started all 13 games at right guard a year later, allowing just two sacks all season. He slid back inside to center for most of the 2016 season (starting at right guard against Texas State), giving him 26 consecutive starts heading into his senior campaign.

Ragnow possesses rare size for a center, which can be problematic, but he might be able to remain at the pivot due to his power and knee bend, which helps him anchor against bull rushers and root out opponents in the running game.

At the NFL level, he is best suited to playing center (or right guard) in a power-based scheme because he does not possess ideal lateral agility and speed to recover.

2. Rawleigh Williams III	**RB**	**5-10**	**226**	**4.58**	**Jr.**
3. Dre Greenlaw	**OLB**	**6-0**	**226**	**4.64**	**Jr.**
4. Josh Liddell	**FS**	**6-1**	**210**	**4.67**	**Sr.**
5. Austin Allen	**QB**	**6-1**	**209**	**4.86**	**Sr.**

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

DB
Josh Liddell
Photo by Michael Wade

Former backup defensive end Karl Roesler will be the Hog. Randy Ramsey is at Razor.

Starting middle linebacker De'Jon "Scoota" Harris had a good spring, replacing graduated four-year starter Brooks Ellis.

Junior Dre Greenlaw, the starting weakside linebacker, would be the team's most heralded defensive player. However, Greenlaw broke his foot six games into last season and then broke it again returning in the Belk Bowl. He did not practice in the spring and hopes to heal by camp.

In the spring, walk-ons Josh Harris — the son of former NFL tight end Jackie Harris — and Grant Morgan, operated the first- and second-team at weakside linebacker.

The defensive line was supposed to be last year's strength but didn't meet potential and returns no starters.

Sophomore five-star defensive end McTelvin "Sosa" Agim and redshirt freshman backup Briston Guidry appear to have the most big-play potential up front, while alternating nose tackles Bijhon Jackson and Austin Capps got big praise.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior place-kicker Cole Hedlund was supplanted during the 2015 and 2016 seasons, mostly because of blocked field goals at crunch time. Hedlund, who is 14 of 22 on career field-goal attempts, had competition in the spring and will again in the fall.

"I've got to get more confidence in our kicking game," Bielema said at the start of spring ball. "And my kicking game has got to give us more confidence."

Sophomore punter Blake Johnson should take over for Toby Baker, who averaged 44.4 yards last season. Johnson attempted two punts last season, for 48 and 46 yards.

Senior receiver Jared Cornelius returns as a sure-handed, solid punt returner. Sophomore receiver Deon Stewart was the primary kick returner.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Because of the Razorbacks' disastrous 2016 finish, a fast 2017 start seems imperative.

That pivots on Arkansas' second and third games — hosting TCU on Sept. 9 in Fayetteville, followed by an SEC opener Sept. 23 against Texas A&M at the Dallas Cowboys' AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Arkansas edged old Southwest Conference rival TCU, 41-38, last season in Fort Worth. Beating A&M, another old Southwest Conference rival, seems essential to regain momentum. The Hogs are 0-5 against the Aggies since A&M joined the SEC in 2012.

Auburn marks the Razorbacks' marquee SEC game in Fayetteville. Revenge? The Tigers embarrassed Arkansas, 56-3, last year in Auburn.

— Nate Allen

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.9	42
Rushing	218.0	24
Passing	188.0	100
Total	406.0	60
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.2	10
Rushing	114.6	12
Passing	208.8	37
Total	323.4	10
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+0.5	T-27

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.9	27
Rushing	197.3	34
Passing	268.2	32
Total	465.5	29
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.4	68
Rushing	116.5	12
Passing	275.2	116
Total	391.6	58
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.54	T-28

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.3	57
Rushing	164.2	78
Passing	264.2	32
Total	428.4	54
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.1	85
Rushing	205.5	94
Passing	221.2	58
Total	426.7	76
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.31	90

NOTEBOOK

Star running back Rawleigh Williams III was injured during the team's final scrimmage of the spring on April 29, when the team was forced indoors due to storms.

Williams, who suffered a broken neck in 2015, went down in a scary scene during a contact drill that was not full tackle. Medical personnel immobilized him and carted him off the field. There was no immediate word of the seriousness of the injury at press time, but Williams' injury history was on everyone's mind.

"Before he left the field, he had full movement of everything out there," coach Bret Bielema said.

No quarterback in the country may be more eager to take the field again than Arkansas senior **Austin Allen**.

He is desperate for a victory while mulling two games that got away at the end of last season. Arkansas failed to hold 24-7 and 24-0 halftime leads, losing at Missouri and in the Belk Bowl to Virginia Tech, respectively.

"I still have a bad taste in my mouth," Allen said in the spring. "Being able to go out and play football games is kinda big for all those guys who were out there."

All the Nightmares on Elm Street couldn't horrify him like watching Missouri and Virginia Tech game film.

"That was not too fun to watch film on that," Allen said. "But you know we've got to swallow it and man up and get over it. Took me about a week watching film over and over and I just decided the only way to go is forward and try to get better."

• Junior **Zach Rogers** and second-year University of Texas transfer **Jake Raulerson** are reserve offensive linemen, but their versatility seems to count for more than just a one spot each on the depth chart.

Arkansas coach **Bret Bielema** has called each a "Swiss Army knife."

"Zach Rogers ... you can use him for everything," Bielema said. "Jake is kind of that ambidextrous guy as well. We have popped him out at guard, popped him in at tackle and he is playing center."

RAZORBACKS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks		Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
8	Austin Allen	QB	6-1	209	Sr.	Fayetteville
11	Daulton Hyatt	QB	6-4	180	Fr.	Attalla, AL
15	Cole Kelley	QB	6-7	258	Fr.	Lafayette, LA
18	Jack Lindsey	QB	6-3	184	Fr.	Fayetteville
14	Carson Proctor	QB	6-4	211	Fr.	Vero Beach, FL
4	Ty Storey	QB	6-2	212	So.	Charleston
Running Backs		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
24	Juan Day	RB	6-1	214	Jr.	North Little Rock
6	T.J. Hammonds	RB	5-10	197	So.	Little Rock
26	Justice Hobbs	RB	5-10	220	Fr..	Farmington
34	Kendrick Jackson	FB	6-1	255	Jr.	Haynesville, LA
32	Hayden Johnson	FB	6-3	248	So.	Columbia, MO
31	Connor McPherson	RB	5-7	208	Sr.	The Woodlands, TX
21	Devwah Whaley	RB	5-11	216	So.	Beaumont, TX
23	Maleek Williams	RB	6-0	230	Fr.	Punta Gorda, FL
22	Rawleigh Williams III	RB	5-10	226	Jr.	Dallas, TX
Wide Receivers		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
20	Troy Allison	WR	6-1	193	Jr.	McGregor, TX
17	Kofi Boateng	WR	6-1	183	Fr.	Arlington, TX
18	Cameron Colbert	WR	6-1	208	Jr.	Little Rock
1	Jared Cornelius	WR	5-11	212	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
86	Tobias Enlow	WR	6-1	200	Fr.	North Little Rock
10	Jordan Jones	WR	6-1	184	Fr.	Smackover
5	Brandon Martin	WR	6-4	215	So.	Monroe, LA
7	Jonathan Nance	WR	6-2	187	Jr.	Gulfport, MS
16	La'Michael Pettway	WR	6-2	216	So.	Nashville
82	Luke Rossi	WR	5-11	197	Jr.	Edmond, OK
13	Deon Stewart	WR	5-11	164	So.	Hardy
19	River Warnock	WR	5-11	185	Jr.	North Little Rock
Tight Ends		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
40	Jamario Bell	TE	6-5	252	So.	Junction City
44	Austin Cantrell	TE	6-4	269	So.	Roland, OK
81	Will Gragg	TE	6-4	254	So.	Dumas
89	Grayson Gunter	TE	6-6	232	So.	Madison, MS
38	Blake Kern	TE	6-6	240	Fr.	Lamar
87	Jack Kraus	TE	6-5	252	Jr.	Bentonville
85	Cheyenne O'Grady	TE	6-4	251	So.	Fayetteville
Offensive Linemen		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
68	Kirby Adcock	OL	6-5	300	Fr.	Nashville
57	Shane Clenin	OL	6-6	295	Fr.	Festus, MO
51	Hjalte Froholdt	OL	6-4	318	Jr.	Svendborg, Denmark
62	Johnny Gibson	OL	6-4	344	Jr.	Dumas
67	Tyler Hall	OL	6-4	296	Fr.	Maumelle
71	Jackson Hannah	OL	6-2	282	Jr.	Bentonville
69	Dylan Hays	OL	6-3	294	Fr.	Little Rock
55	Jake Heinrich	OL	6-4	295	Fr.	Urbandale, IA
74	Colton Jackson	OL	6-6	300	So.	Conway
73	Deion Malone	OL	6-3	296	Jr.	Conway
79	Jalen Merrick	OL	6-4	327	So.	Oak Hill, FL
72	Frank Ragnow	OL	6-5	319	Sr.	Victoria, MN
76	Paul Ramirez	OL	6-6	299	Sr.	Rialto, CA
50	Jake Raulerson	OL	6-4	301	Sr.	Celina, TX
75	Zach Rogers	OL	6-1	306	Jr.	Carrollton, TX
61	Cooper Sone	OL	6-2	277	So.	Fayetteville
78	Dalton Wagner	OL	6-9	330	Fr.	Spring Grove, IL
60	Brian Wallace	OL	6-6	335	Jr.	Florissant, MO
Defensive Linemen		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
3	McTelvin Agim	DL	6-3	289	So.	Texarkana, TX
41	Austin Capps	DL	6-4	309	So.	Star City
98	Daytrieon Dean	DL	6-3	281	So.	Fort Smith
97	Brandon DePrato	DL	6-4	218	Fr.	Cypress, TX
7	Briston Guidry	DL	6-3	294	Fr.	Metairie, LA
99	Elias Hale	DL	6-5	217	Fr.	Fayetteville
95	Jake Hall	DL	6-5	266	Jr.	Springdale
78	Bijhon Jackson	DL	6-2	335	Sr.	El Dorado
42	Jonathan Marshall	DL	6-4	299	Fr.	Shepherd, TX
52	T.J. Smith	DL	6-3	285	So.	Moultrie, GA
91	Michael Taylor II	DL	6-3	245	Jr.	Orlando, FL
90	Armon Watts	DL	6-5	293	Jr.	St. Louis, MO
Linebackers		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
53	Ben Brasuell	LB	6-1	218	Fr.	Benton
46	Damani Carter	LB	6-0	241	So.	Fayetteville
40	Kyrei Fisher	LB	6-2	235	Fr.	Tulsa, OK
35	Dwayne Eugene	LB	6-1	235	Sr.	Marrero, LA
23	Dre Greenlaw	LB	6-0	226	Jr.	Fayetteville
8	De'Jon Harris	LB	6-0	255	So.	Harvey, LA
45	Josh Harris	LB	5-10	239	Jr.	Pine Bluff
4	Alexy Jean-Baptiste	LB	6-2	231	Fr.	Pompano Beach, FL
19	Giovanni LaFrance	LB	6-1	255	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
31	Grant Morgan	LB	5-11	22-	Fr.	Greenwood
34	Tyler Phillips	LB	6-1	232	So.	North Little Rock
10	Randy Ramsey	LB	6-4	228	Jr.	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
96	Karl Roesler	LB	6-1	256	Sr.	Louisville, KY
33	Dee Walker	LB	6-2	208	Fr.	Moultrie, GA
Defensive Backs		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
37	Devin Buckner	DB	5-10	190	So.	Pine Bluff
32	Dylan Calhoun	DB	5-10	185	Jr.	Waxahachie, TX
20	De'Andre Coley	DB	6-1	214	Sr.	Miami, FL
13	Nate Dalton	DB	6-3	190	So.	Baton Rouge, LA
22	Deon Edwards	DB	6-1	205	Fr.	Clermont, FL
15	Korey Hernandez	DB	5-10	170	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
36	Cory Hollowell	DB	6-2	202	Jr.	Corona, CA
39	Byron Keaton	DB	5-10	183	So.	Camden
28	Josh Liddell	DB	6-1	210	Sr.	Pine Bluff
24	Ryder Lucas	DB	6-0	190	Jr.	The Woodlands, TX
38	Reid Miller	DB	5-9	197	Jr.	Hollidaysburg, PA
11	Ryan Pulley	DB	5-11	198	Jr.	Fort Myers, FL
9	Santos Ramirez	DB	6-2	205	Jr.	Shreveport, LA
30	Kevin Richardson II	DB	6-0	178	Sr.	Jacksonville
25	Micahh Smith	DB	6-0	195	Fr.	Marshall, TX
5	Henre' Toliver	DB	6-1	185	Sr.	Marrero, LA
14	Britto Tutt	DB	6-2	177	So.	Augusta, GA
Specialist		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
49	Robert Decker	LS	6-0	249	Sr.	Greenwich, CT
9	Cole Hedlund	K	5-10	175	Jr.	Argyle, TX
18	Blake Johnson	P	6-0	193	So.	Long Beach, CA
42	Connor Limpert	K	6-1	176	So.	Allen, TX
43	George Madden	LS	6-1	230	So.	Blanchard, OK

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On Bret Bielema:** "It's time for Bret Bielema to put up or shut up. It's time to make substantial improvement, or the people in Arkansas will realize they've got the wrong guy. He hasn't done anything significant yet. What's he done that Houston Nutt didn't do in five years?

"He beat LSU and Ole Miss in back to back years. If that's what your standard is, then you're happy. He's never been in contention in the West. He's never been in contention for a BCS bowl. He's one of those guys that over-promises and under-delivers."

• **On the team:** "Philosophically, they've made a lot of changes. They've gone from a power run game to throwing it more. Even on defense, they've changed dramatically. On defense, they were very vanilla. I guess they're expanding that in a major way. The quarterback (Austin Allen) will give them a chance. He's a very good player."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Allen	13	146.0	245	401	15	61.1	3430	25	73	263.8
T. Storey	3	31.3	1	4	0	25.0	3	0	3	1.0

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Morgan	13	65	739	11.4	3	36	56.8
K. Hatcher	12	44	743	16.9	8	73	61.9
J. Sprinkle	13	33	380	11.5	4	31	29.2

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Williams	13	245	1403	43	1360	5.6	12	72	104.6
D. Whaley	13	110	634	32	602	5.5	3	75	46.3
K. Walker	7	33	115	6	109	3.3	1	17	15.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: B. Ellis 83, J. Liddell 63, D. Wise 49, J. Ledbetter 49
Tackles for loss: J. Ledbetter 7.5, B. Ellis 7, three tied with 5.5
Sacks: J. Ledbetter 5.5, D. Wise 3.5, three tied with 2.5
Interceptions: J. Liddell 2, R. Pulley 2, H. Toliver 2

247SPORTS RAZORBACKS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Brandon Martin, WR

The four-star junior college recruit went through spring practices and impressed immediately. The 6-4, 205-pound Martin is a big target, but he also has the speed and athleticism to stretch the field vertically. Martin should factor into the starting lineup this fall for Arkansas.

Chevin Calloway, CB

The electric four-star recruit is capable of earning snaps his first year on campus. The 5-10, 180-pound Calloway is an impressive cover corner who does an excellent job staying attached to receivers. Calloway was an Under Armour All-American as a high school senior.

Montaric Brown, S

The 6-0, 185-pound Brown is an excellent player on the back end of the defense. Brown, a four-star recruit, can cover sideline to sideline using his great speed. The Army All-American is expected to make an immediate impact at Arkansas.

SLEEPER

Shane Clenin, OL

Enrolling early and going through spring practices certainly helped this 6-6, 295-pound offensive lineman. Look for Clenin to join the long list of talented trench players to come out of Arkansas in recent years. The three-star recruit showed enough mobility and toughness during the spring that he might earn playing time his first year.

2018 NEEDS

Arkansas is looking at signing a deep defensive line class in 2018. As the Razorbacks transition to a 3-4 front, inking bigger defensive linemen also becomes a priority. Offensive line will also be an important position group for Arkansas and its run-heavy offense this coming recruiting cycle.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

5★	4★	3★	2★
0	4	25	0

Committments	29
Average Stars	3.14
Total Stars	91
National Rank: 28	SEC: 10

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Kirby Adcock	OL	6-5	300	★★★	Nashville	Nashville
Ranked No. 64 offensive lineman nationally and No. 5 player in Arkansas by 247Sports.com.						
Maleek Barkley	WR	5-11	186	★★★	Austin, TX	Lake Travis
247Sports.com rated No. 90 wide receiver nationally and No. 83 player in Texas… Had more than 4,600 career yards from scrimmage and 53 touchdowns… As a senior, had 1,345 yards rushing and 17 touchdowns… Had 613 yards receiving and seven touchdowns.						
Jarrod Barnes	WR	5-11	172	★★★	Cabot	Cabot
Ranked No. 47 athlete nationally and No. 3 player in Arkansas by 247Sports.com… Had 867 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns as a senior.						
Montaric Brown	S	6-0	175	★★★★	Ashdown	Ashdown
247Sports.com rated No. 19 safety nationally and No. 1 player in Arkansas… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… As a senior, had 110 tackles and seven interceptions, returning one 71 yards for a touchdown… Had 52 receptions for 813 yards and seven touchdowns.						
Chevin Calloway	CB	5-10	180	★★★★	Dallas, TX	Bishop Dunne
Ranked No. 17 cornerback nationally and No. 22 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 61 tackles, including 12 tackles for loss, 11 passes broken up and three interceptions as a senior.						
Ty Clary	OL	6-4	285	★★★	Fayetteville	Fayetteville
247Sports.com rated No. 15 offensive guard in Arkansas… Helped team to two consecutive state championships.						
Shane Clenin	OL	6-6	295	★★★	Festus, MO	Jefferson
Ranked No. 92 offensive lineman nationally and No. 8 player in Missouri by 247Sports.com… Played in Offense-Defense All American Game… Had 60 pancake blocks, 33 tackles and four tackles for loss as a senior.						
Kamren Curl	CB	6-2	175	★★★	Muskogee, OK	Muskogee
247Sports.com ranked No. 11 player in Oklahoma and No. 43 athlete nationally… As a senior, had 89 tackles and six passes broken up… Had 46 receptions for 533 yards and six touchdowns.						
Jordon Curtis	CB	6-0	180	★★★	Jenks, OK	Jenks
Ranked No. 16 player in Oklahoma by 247Sports.com… Helped team to three state championships… Had 784 yards rushing and nine touchdowns on 63 carries as a senior… Had eight receptions for 177 yards and one touchdown.						
Kyrei Fisher	OL	6-2	235	★★★	Tulsa, OK	Union City
247Sports.com rated No. 14 player in Oklahoma… As a senior, had 65 tackles and eight quarterback sacks.						
De'Shawn Gulledge	ATH	5-11	185	★★★	Kensett	Bald Knob
Ranked No. 11 player in Arkansas by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 697 yards rushing and 16 touchdowns… Had 36 receptions for 909 yards and 12 touchdowns… Returned six punts for 232 yards and seven kickoffs for 215 yards and scored five touchdowns.						
Chase Hayden	RB	5-11	195	★★★	Memphis	St. George's Independent School
247Sports.com rated No. 4 all-purpose running back nationally and No. 10 player in Tennessee… Had 7,000 career rushing yards and 92 touchdowns… Had 1,940 yards rushing and 27 touchdowns on 160 carries as a senior.						
Hayden Henry	LB	6-3	215	★★★	Little Rock	Pulaski Academy
Ranked No. 16 player in Arkansas by 247Sports.com… Helped team to three consecutive state championships… As a senior, had 93 tackles (39 solo), including 9.5 tackles for loss, and four interceptions.						
Korey Hernandez	CB	5-10	170	★★★	Atlanta, GA	Cedar Grove
Helped team to 13-2 record and state championship as a senior… Had 64 tackles, 27 passes broken up, two fumbles caused and three interceptions… Had more than 1,000 all-purpose yards.						
Audry Horn	OL	6-3	320	★★★	Benton	Little Rock Catholic
247Sports.com rated No. 18 player in Arkansas… Helped team to state playoffs for four consecutive years.						
Daulton Hyatt	QB	6-4	180	★★★	Attalla, AL	Etowah
Had 6,216 career passing yards and 50 touchdowns… As a senior, completed 121 of 184 passes for 2,240 yards and 25 touchdowns with five interceptions.						
Koilan Jackson	WR	6-3	212	★★★	Little Rock	Joe T. Robinson
247Sports.com rated No. 4 player in Arkansas… Had 57 receptions for 1,206 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior… Had 487 yards rushing and eight touchdowns.						
Melvin Johnson, II	DE	6-4	246	★★★	North Las Vegas, NV	Riverside C.C. (CA)
Ranked No. 23 junior college defensive tackle nationally by 247Sports.com… As a sophomore, had 37 tackles, including nine tackles for loss, and one quarterback sack.						
Brandon Martin	WR	6-4	205	★★★★	Dallas, TX	Mississippi Gulf Coast C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 2 junior college wide receiver and No. 8 player nationally… As a freshman, had 23 receptions for 327 yards and four touchdowns.						
Jarques McClellion	CB	6-0	175	★★★	Lake Worth, FL	American Heritage
247Sports.com rated No. 90 cornerback nationally and No. 115 player in Florida… Had 46 tackles and 21 passes broken up as a senior… Scored four receiving touchdowns.						
Derrick Munson	LB	5-11	200	★★★	New Orleans, LA	Archbishop Rummel
Ranked No. 60 outside linebacker nationally and No. 38 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 120 tackles, including five tackles for loss, and five interceptions… Had 160 tackles, including 21 tackles for loss, as a junior.						
Jonathan Nance	WR	6-2	180	★★★	Gulfport, MS	Mississippi Gulf Coast C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 13 junior college wide receiver and No. 117 player nationally… Had 13 receptions for 153 yards as a sophomore… As a freshman, had 31 receptions for 400 yards and three touchdowns.						
Jeremy Patton	TE	6-6	236	★★★★	Indianapolis, IN	Arizona Western
Ranked No. 1 junior college tight end nationally by 247Sports.com… Helped team to 11-1 record and NJCAA championship game… In 2016, had 18 receptions for 242 yards and six touchdowns.						
Josh Paul	LB	6-2	205	★★★	Kenner, LA	De La Salle
247Sports.com rated No. 82 outside linebacker nationally and No. 48 player in Louisiana… As a senior, had 81 tackles, including five tackles for loss, one quarterback sack, two fumbles caused, and returned an interception 80 yards for a touchdown.						
David Porter	DE	6-3	240	★★★	Little Rock	Joe T. Robinson
Ranked No. 42 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 10 player in Arkansas by 247Sports.com… Had 105 tackles (68 solo), including 24 tackles for loss, and 10 quarterback sacks as a senior.						
Gabe Richardson	DE/OLB	6-4	240	★★★	Decatur, GA	Hutchinson C.C. (KS)
247Sports.com rated No. 14 junior college weakside defensive end nationally… In 2016, had 60 tackles (37 solo), including 18.5 tackles for loss, and six quarterback sacks.						
Daulton Wagner	OL	6-9	315	★★★	Spring Grove, IL	Richmond Burton
Ranked No. 32 offensive lineman nationally and No. 4 player in Illinois by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game.						
De'Vion Warren	ATH	5-11	176	★★★	Monroe, LA	Ouachita Parish
247Sports.com rated No. 37 player in Louisiana… Scored 39 total touchdowns as a senior… Had 1,361 yards rushing… Completed 57 of 128 passes for 1,022 yards and one interception.						
Maleek Williams	RB	6-0	230	★★★	Punta Gorda, FL	Charlotte
Ranked No. 47 running back nationally by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 1,294 yards rushing and 24 touchdowns.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Ragnow Next in Line of Great Bielema OLs

Between the pro-caliber offensive linemen that Bret Bielema produced at Wisconsin and Arkansas, he could start his own NFL offensive line.

Included are three centers. Two of them — Peter Konz at Wisconsin and Travis Swanson at Arkansas — were All-Americans. Swanson still goes strong as the Detroit Lions starting center.

Great as they were when they played for him, Bielema believes he could have a better pro prospect on the way. He thinks that highly of Frank Ragnow.

Ragnow pondered entering the 2017 NFL Draft but returns to the Razorbacks as the senior center and captain. He was second-team All-SEC last year and is expected to contend for the Rimington Trophy, awarded to the nation's most outstanding center.

"I've had a lot of players play really good at that position and he's as good as I have ever had," Bielema said. "In my opinion, he could be something special, not only at our level but beyond."

How special? Over Ragnow's objections, Bielema in the spring gave him the star treatment usually reserved for running backs who are bound for the NFL. Not wanting to risk injury, Bielema withheld Ragnow from every spring scrimmage.

"Some of those guys that are at a certain level, you just can't get them that much better," Bielema said.

Ragnow didn't like it. So he was determined to get everything he could from the contact work he got in the other practices. On scrimmage days, he attacked the weight room like it was an All-SEC nose tackle.

"Definitely a different phase than I've ever been in my life," Ragnow said. "It's been hard not being out there. But I've been able to come in Saturday mornings and get a really good workout with Coach Herb (strength coach Ben Herbert). He's challenged me."

It's just more motivation among Ragnow's driving motivations. He is not just interested in enhancing his NFL aspirations, but rebounding from the 2016 Razorbacks' embarrassing second-half meltdowns in the final two games of last season.

C

Frank Ragnow

Photo by Michael Wade

Arkansas wasted a 24-0 halftime lead in the Belk Bowl, losing 35-24 to Virginia Tech.

"You think how terrible that Virginia Tech game was, but I think overall it was a blessing to us," Ragnow said.

"Because we take that personally. If we had won that game, we would have been all happy, high-tailed about it. I think losing that game really opened some eyes to some players who hadn't really bought into the process. We have been really hungry."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/arkansas

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB AUSTIN ALLEN

Allen completed 245 of 401 passes for an SEC-leading 3,430 yards, with 25 TDs and 15 interceptions last season. ... His season- and career-high was 400 yards against Alabama's mighty defense, when he was forced to attempt 48 passes in a comeback effort. He was picked off three times, all by defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick. ... Allen had four games with at least 300 yards passing. ... His patience paid off, as he spent three years on campus without taking a snap.

EMERGING STAR

DE MCTELVIN "SOSA" AGIM

The 6-3, 289 sophomore made 5.5 tackles for loss and had four quarterback hurries as a backup in 2016. ... He looks to be the run-stopping/pass-rushing difference-maker this defense desperately needs in its new 3-4 scheme. ... It's his combination of speed and size that makes him special. ... Selected to the coaches' SEC All-Freshman Team. ... Was a five-star recruit, according to 247Sports and was the state of Arkansas' Gatorade Player of the Year as a senior.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR BRANDON MARTIN

The junior college transfer wide receiver is big (6-4, 215) and fast. ... He caught nine passes for 91 yards and a touchdown in two spring scrimmages against the first-team defense ... There are plenty of Arkansas newcomers — including redshirts and nine early enrolled prospects — who could make a difference, but Martin is at a position of need. The Hogs graduated four of their top five pass-catchers from last season.

WIN YOUR CONFERENCE, WIN YOUR YEAR.

WHERE FANS GO FOR TICKETS.

TICKETCITY™ | TicketCity.com | 1-800-SOLDOUT

AUBURN TIGERS

For more coverage of the Tigers, visit auburn.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chip Lindsey **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Kevin Steele **STADIUM:** Jordan-Hare Stadium: 87,451

QB PLAY ONCE AGAIN VITAL TO TIGERS' SUCCESS

Auburn's 2016 season could be summed up in two ways. When quarterback Sean White and tailback Kamryn Pettway were healthy and on the field, the Tigers were a legitimate Top 10 team. When they weren't, they were merely average.

Despite the fact that Gus Malzahn's team owned one of the nation's best defenses, the top rushing offense in the SEC and arguably the nation's best kicker, the team had no answer at quarterback once White's throwing shoulder was injured in a win over Ole Miss.

White valiantly saved Auburn from the jaws of defeat at home against Vanderbilt in a relief appearance of backup John Franklin III the following week. But his injury was too much to overcome in a heart-breaking road loss to rival Georgia, which led to a 1-3 finish — including a loss to Oklahoma in the Sugar Bowl — after a six-game winning streak moved the Tigers to ninth in the College Football Playoff standings with three regular-season games to play.

In the offseason, Malzahn injected new life into AU's offense when he and the coaching staff convinced former Baylor quarterback Jarrett Stidham to transfer to the Plains after sitting out a year due to the NCAA transfer rule. He also selected Chip Lindsey to be his new offensive play-caller after Rhett Lashlee accepted the OC job at Connecticut in a surprise move.

Stidham instantly upgrades the QB talent level and gives the Tigers two experienced options. His arrival also creates more competition at the most important position on the field, which is never a bad thing.

Lindsey will coach the quarterbacks in addition to calling plays. So far, he's liked what he's seen from his top two signal-callers, along with early enrollee Malik Willis, who turned heads in the spring.

"Jarrett came in and got a lot of reps. But Sean got some 7-on-7 stuff in and we are really excited about getting those two back in the fall," Lindsey said. "It will only make us better having a couple of guys competing for it. I also like the way Malik progressed. The future looks bright for him."

Don't expect much to change with Auburn's running game with Lindsey on board. The Tigers know how to run the ball.

But if the new-look pass attack, regardless whether it's led by Stidham or White, can work the ball downfield with more regularity, the Tigers appear to have the pieces in place to compete for a championship.

"If we keep working, we have a chance to be successful," center Austin Golson said.

OFFENSE

The addition of Jarrett Stidham, along with the return of veteran Sean White, gives Auburn stability at quarterback after two seasons of unpredictable play.

Stidham, an athletic dual-threat, has all the tools to be one of the league's best passers and might be ahead of White entering the summer due to a productive spring in coordinator Chip Lindsey's offense. But don't expect White to go down without a fight after he proved he could efficiently operate the offense — and win games — when he was healthy a year ago.

Bruiser Kamryn Pettway and versatile threat Kerryon Johnson headline a running back position that's deep and talented. Pettway led the SEC in rushing yards per game (122.4) last year after only appearing in 10 games, while Johnson topped the team in all-purpose yards (1,287) despite playing through nagging injuries for much of the year. Speedsters Kam Martin and C.J. Tolbert and hard-nosed runner Malik Miller will also vie for touches.

Chandler Cox will once again man the selfless H-back position. He usually won't have a big stat line, but his blocking ability is vital to the team's rushing success.

Cox could also see some work with Jalen Harris and Sal Cannella at tight end, a position Lindsey vows to use more this season. Harris, who had two catches for two touchdowns a year ago, has worked hard to become a good blocker. Cannella, a JC transfer, could be a matchup problem for defenders due to his size (6-5, 230) and receiving prowess.

The receiving corps doesn't have a bona fide No. 1 wideout as of yet, but keep an eye on Nate Craig-Myers, who capped a great spring with a five-catch, 154-yard performance in the A-Day Game. Craig-Myers has

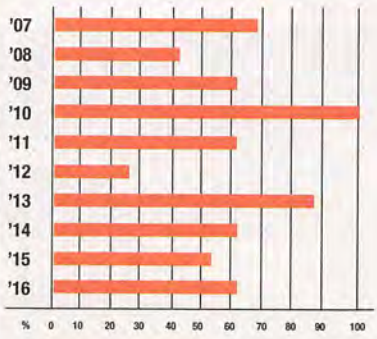
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	5-7
Sept. 9	at Clemson	14-1
Sept. 16	MERCER	6-5
Sept. 23	at Missouri	4-8
Sept. 30	MISSISSIPPI STATE	6-7
Oct. 7	OLE MISS	5-7
Oct. 14	at LSU	8-4
Oct. 21	at Arkansas	7-6
Nov. 4	at Texas A&M	8-5
Nov. 11	GEORGIA	8-5
Nov. 18	ULM	4-8
Nov. 25	ALABAMA	14-1

RESULTS

8-5, 5-3		
L	CLEMSON	13-19
W	ARKANSAS STATE	51-14
L	TEXAS A&M	16-29
W	LSU	18-13
W	ULM	58-7
W	at Mississippi State	38-14
W	ARKANSAS	56-3
W	at Ole Miss	40-29
W	VANDERBILT	23-16
L	at Georgia	7-13
W	ALABAMA A&M	55-0
L	at Alabama	12-30
	Sugar Bowl	
L	vs. Oklahoma	19-35

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Auburn, Ala.

2016:
8-5 overall, 5-3 SEC (T-2nd, West)

COACH:
Gus Malzahn — At Auburn: 35-18, 4 years; overall: 44-21, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
17; 8 offense, 8 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jarrett Stidham, RB Kamryn Pettway, RB Kerryon Johnson, OT Braden Smith, DE Marlon Davidson, DT Derrick Brown, LB Tre' Williams, LB Deshaun Davis, CB Carlton Davis, K Daniel Carlson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Depth at quarterback. The running game, led by Pettway and Johnson, should once again be among the nation's best operating behind a deep, talented offensive line. The defensive line has numbers and skill. The linebackers are fast, experienced and instinctive. The veteran secondary is long and athletic. Carlson is the best kicker in the country.

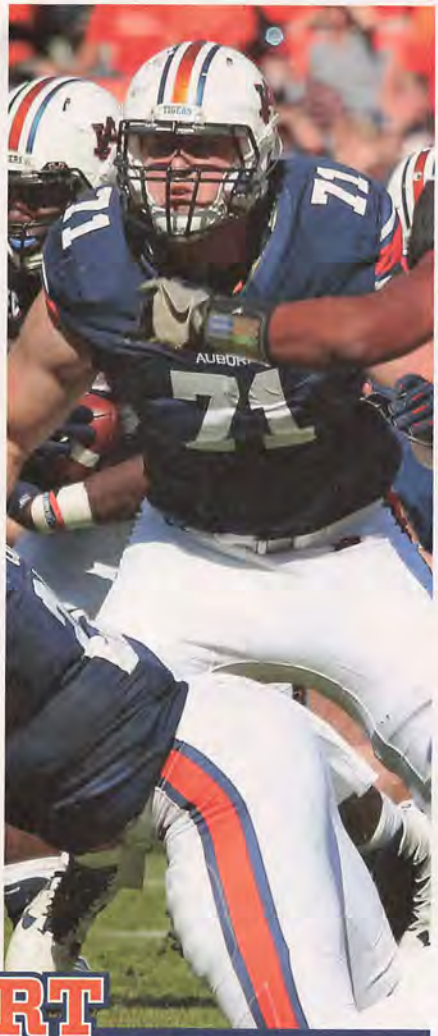
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Despite the promise of the receivers, there is no proven No. 1 wideout. Depth at tight end could be an issue if injuries occur. Due to the departures of the team's top two pass rushers — DE Carl Lawson and DT Montravius Adams — Auburn is void of a proven sack artist.

KEY LOSSES:
OL Alex Kozan, BUCK Carl Lawson, DT Montravius Adams, NB Rudy Ford, P Kevin Phillips

OVERVIEW:
On paper, Auburn looks like it should be able to compete for the SEC West title. It plays some of its toughest games at home, is solid in all three phases of the game and the roster has a nice blend of young and veteran talent. And regardless of who wins the starting quarterback job, the players feel like they have two reliable signal-callers in tow in case one guy goes down, a luxury not a lot of teams have.

KEY NUMBER:
7 Auburn's defense made a big jump in improvement from 2015 to 2016, and a lot of that had to do with the play of its run defense. The Tigers only allowed seven rushing scores all season. Only Alabama (4), Louisville (4) and LSU (6) allowed fewer.

RB
Kamryn
PETTWAY
Photo by Joe Robbins



RT
Braden Smith
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Jarrett Stidham	So.	Will compete with White for the starting job.	**Sean White, Jr.***
RB	**Kamryn Pettway***	Jr.	Physical, bruising runner who wears down a defense.	Kerryon Johnson, Jr.
HB	**Chandler Cox***	Jr.	One of the most important players on team; physical blocker.	Keenan Sweeney, Jr.
WR	Nate Craig-Myers	So.	Has size, skill set to emerge as a go-to wideout.	**Darius Slayton, So.***
WR	**Eli Stove***	So.	Big-play threat; blazing speed; savvy football player.	Ryan Davis, Jr.
TE	Jalen Harris	Jr.	Key blocker in run game; reliable hands.	Sal Cannella, So.
LT	**Darius James***	Sr.	"Human forklift" according to teammate Marlon Davidson.	Prince Tega Wanogho, So.
LG	Marquel Harrell	So.	One of team's most improved players, say teammates.	Bailey Sharp, So.
C	**Austin Golson***	Sr.	Smart, tough and battle-tested; has all-conference potential.	Kaleb Kim, So.
RG	Mike Horton	So.	Big, powerful road grader; hard to move backward.	Tyler Carr, So.
RT	**Braden Smith***	Sr.	One of the best in SEC; when he locks on, he finishes.	Prince Micheal Sammons, Fr.
K	**Daniel Carlson***	Sr.	Best kicker in the country; incredible leg strength.	Ian Shannon, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	**Marlon Davidson***	So.	Plays with relentless effort; potential is there to be great.	Byron Cowart, Jr.
NT	**Dontavius Russell***	Jr.	Strong at the point of attack; entering third year as a starter.	Derrick Brown, So.
DT	Derrick Brown	So.	Sky is limit; poised for breakout after contributing as true frosh.	Andrew Williams, Jr.
BUCK	Jeff Holland	Jr.	Will expanded role show off natural pass-rush ability?	Paul James III, Sr.
LB	**Deshaun Davis***	Jr.	Passionate, fiery player; big hitter; instinctive.	Montavious Atkinson, Jr.
LB	**Tre' Williams***	Sr.	Smart; uses hands well to get off blocks; dissects well.	Darrell Williams, Jr.
LB	**Darrell Williams***	Jr.	Rangy, versatile player; good in pass coverage; sure tackler.	Chandler Wooten, Fr.
CB	Javaris Davis	So.	Continues to improve; has elite speed; tough.	John Broussard Jr., So.
CB	**Carlton Davis***	Jr.	One of best cover corners in SEC; athletic; good run stopper.	Marlon Character Jr., Fr.
S	**Tray Matthews***	Sr.	Can flourish in run support and cover bigger receiving threats.	Nick Ruffin, Sr.
S	**Stephen Roberts***	Sr.	Sound technician; could be poised for a big year.	Michael Sherwood, Sr.
P	Ian Shannon	So.	Gets first crack at punting duties.	Daniel Carlson, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

good size (6-2, 208) and speed and showed a knack for catching the ball at its highest point on a number of deep passes during the spring game.

Darius Slayton and Eli Stove, athletic speedsters, could also be candidates to emerge in the passing game after being heavily involved in the offense last year as freshmen. Will Hastings, Ryan Davis and converted quarterback John Franklin III could see a heavy workload in the slot. Marquis McClain and Kyle Davis (assuming he returns from personal leave) are bigger targets who are downfield threats.

Auburn's offensive line was good last season, but it has the potential to be even better in 2017. Center Austin Golson, right tackle Braden Smith and left tackle Darius James headline the unit. Smith moved from right guard to right tackle to make room for guard Mike Horton, a big (6-4, 323), powerful, run blocker. Marquel Harrell, who had a good spring, is likely to round out the starting unit at left guard.

DEFENSE

Last season, Auburn's defense accomplished something it hadn't done since 2008, limiting opponents to fewer than 20 points per game. In fact, the Tigers, under the direction of coordinator Kevin Steele, finished seventh nationally in scoring defense (17.1 ppg), due in large part to their strong red-zone defense, which ranked 11th nationally.

Despite the departures of key veterans Carl Lawson, Montravius Adams, Josh Holsey and Rudy Ford, the Tigers should once again be stout on this side of the ball. But Steele will need a couple of players to emerge in the pass-rushing department after losing his best edge (Lawson) and interior (Adams) rushers.

Defensive end Marlon Davidson is expected to be even better in year two after becoming the first true freshman to start along the defensive line for Auburn in 30 years. Davidson's strength is run defense, but his relentless motor could allow him to emerge as a quality pass-rushing candidate.

Veteran Dontavius Russell is an underrated performer who is entering his third season as a starter at defensive tackle. He'll team up with Derrick Brown to give the Tigers a solid duo on the interior. Brown has the potential to be an All-SEC-type player due to his size (6-5, 317) and off-the-charts athletic ability.

Key reserves Andrew Williams and Byron Cowart will supply D-line depth.

A few candidates to replace Lawson at the BUCK position are Jeff Holland, Paul James III and Nick Coe. James was the defensive MVP of the A-Day Game, and Coe was called a "physical freak" by Davidson. Holland is a natural pass rusher.

Tre' Williams, Darrell Williams and Deshaun Davis make up one of the best starting linebacking units in the SEC. Tre' Williams and Davis are the thumpers of the group. Darrell Williams can cover tight

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Kamryn Pettway RB 6-0 240 4.67 rJr.

With all due respect to fellow SEC big backs Leonard Fournette (LSU) and Bo Scarbrough (Alabama), Pettway was the conference's elite runaway freight train in 2016, leading the league with an eye-popping 122.4 rushing yards per game over the regular season to earn first-team All-SEC honors.

He was the first back at Auburn to rush for more than 150 yards in four consecutive games since the great Bo Jackson in 1985, averaging 192.5 yards and scoring a combined six touchdowns over a month-long span against SEC opponents Mississippi State, Arkansas, Mississippi and Vanderbilt.

As his size suggests, Pettway is an intimidating between-the-tackles runner, bulldozing through would-be tacklers due to broad shoulders and a thick lower half. When not struggling through an ankle injury last year, Pettway proved surprisingly agile and accelerates smoothly for a big man, showing the vision and burst to attack cutback lanes and gain yardage in chunks.

Pettway surprised some by electing to return for another year after his breakout season but should have plenty of tread left on his tires after logging zero carries at fullback in 2015. If he can remain healthy, Pettway could leave defenders and last year's rushing total of 1,224 yards (13th all-time at Auburn) in the dust in 2017.

2. Braden Smith	**OG**	**6-5**	**300**	**5.08**	**Sr.**
3. Tray Matthews	**S**	**6-1**	**207**	**4.65**	**Sr.**
4. Daniel Carlson	**K**	**6-4**	**218**	**5.07**	**Sr.**
5. Austin Golson	**C**	**6-5**	**314**	**5.28**	**Sr.**

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

QB Jarrett Stidham

Photo by AP Photo/Todd Van Emst

ends and rush the passer due to his length and athletic ability. They complement each other extremely well. Montavious Atkinson, Chandler Wooten, an early enrollee, and Richard McBryde will supply depth.

Daniel Thomas appears to be in line to take over Ford's nickel back role. Thomas had two interceptions last year against Alabama in the Iron Bowl. Jeremiah Dinson is another to watch here.

Safety Tray Matthews and cornerback Carlton Davis anchor a secondary that's deep and experienced. Matthews led the team in tackles last year and seemed comfortable with his role in Steele's defense.

Davis seems poised to return to an all-conference level after ankle and shoulder injuries hindered his play last season.

Javaris Davis will likely be the team's other starting corner. Jamel Dean, John Broussard Jr. and Marlon Character Jr. offer quality depth.

Nick Ruffin and Stephen Roberts, like Matthews and Tre' Williams, are experienced seniors that can be counted on at safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Daniel Carlson is a two-time finalist for the Lou Groza Award, given annually to the nation's top kicker. He's been a model of consistency during his time on the Plains and is a *Lindy's* first-team All-American entering his final season in an Auburn uniform.

Last year, the 6-4, 218-pound Carlson converted 28 of 32 field-goal attempts, which included a long of 53 yards. His six field-goal performance against LSU tied an Auburn and SEC record.

Auburn likely will replace graduated punter Kevin Phillips with Ian Shannon. Veteran Ike Powell will be the long snapper.

Kerryon Johnson and Stephen Roberts are candidates to handle the kickoff and punt return duties. Roberts took over the punt-return chores late last season and flashed big-play ability.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Auburn will have an opportunity to find its footing in the season-opener against Sun Belt foe Georgia Southern before heading out on the road to play defending national champion Clemson in Week Two.

If the Tigers win in Death Valley, it's not inconceivable to think that Malzahn's crew could be 6-0 heading into the matchup with LSU in Baton Rouge, which begins a pivotal three-game road stretch for AU. Trips to Fayetteville and College Station follow the date with the Bayou Bengals, but both of those games are winnable.

The really tough part of the schedule however comes down to beating rivals Georgia and Alabama, which are a combined 6-0 against the Tigers in the past three seasons.

— Matt Lowe

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.5	25
Rushing	255.5	13
Passing	229.5	66
Total	485.0	16
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.7	62
Rushing	168.8	67
Passing	230.1	68
Total	398.8	64
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.5	T-27

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.5	75
Rushing	196.4	35
Passing	173.6	110
Total	370.0	94
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.0	T-54
Rushing	182.7	81
Passing	222.5	63
Total	405.2	71
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	T-51

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.2	49
Rushing	271.3	6
Passing	169.5	112
Total	440.8	43
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.1	7
Rushing	132.8	27
Passing	229.2	67
Total	361.9	28
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.23	T-42

NOTEBOOK

Look for Auburn to try to get the ball into the hands of the running backs out of the backfield more this season. New OC **Chip Lindsey** has arguably the top returning tailback tandem in the league in **Kamryn Pettway** and **Kerryon Johnson**, but there is an ongoing battle between **Kam Martin**, **Malik Miller** and former walk-on **C.J. Tolbert** for the No. 3 spot.

• Lindsey on the receivers: "That group, as a unit, maybe made as much progress as anybody this spring. I don't know about a bona fide No. 1 guy, but I feel really good about five or six guys."

• Offensive tackle **Prince Tega Wanogho** had a great spring according to players and coaches. He could be used in goal-line or unbalanced line situations as an additional blocker.

• Auburn will welcome Jacksonville State graduate **Casey Dunn** and Florida State graduate **Wilson Bell** to an already talented offensive line rotation this fall. Dunn (6-3, 285) was a two-year starter and an All-American for the FCS Gamecocks. Bell (6-5, 320) started 19 games for the Seminoles, including all 13 games in 2015.

• Former Auburn OC **Al Borges** returned to the team as an offensive analyst. He'll scout opponents and assist Lindsey with game-planning.

• **Larry Porter** is Auburn's new tight ends/H-backs coach in addition to being the recruiting coordinator. He was hired away from North Carolina in the offseason.

• Rushing the passer may be a question mark for this year's team, but several Auburn players and coaches raved about the potential of 6-6, 270-pound redshirt freshman **Nick Coe**, who will be an option to replace Carl Lawson at the BUCK position. Said linebackers coach **Travis Williams**: "He has God-given ability and he just flashes when he's on film."

• **Deshaun Davis** on taking the defense to another level: "We have a lot of experienced guys coming back. We are trying to build depth. We want 22 guys that can play the brand of Auburn defense that we built on last year."

• **Carlton Davis** on new secondary coach **Greg Brown**: "He's a cool guy. He knows a lot about the game; he came from the NFL. He's not a real aggressive coach, but he's more about the technique part and doing things the right way."

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
16 Devin Adams	QB	6-3	251	Sr.	Mobile
1 Woody Barrett	QB	6-2	231	Fr.	Winter Garden, FL
5 John Franklin III	QB	6-1	183	Sr.	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
8 Jarrett Stidham	QB	6-2	210	So.	Stephenville, TX
13 Sean White	QB	6-0	190	Jr.	Boca Raton, FL
14 Malik Willis	QB	6-1	185	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
43 Cedric Chambers	RB	5-7	186	So.	Valley
27 Chandler Cox	FB	6-1	233	Jr.	Apopka, FL
45 Chase Cramer	FB	5-10	213	So.	Orlando, FL
40 Eugene Govan	RB	5-7	190	So.	Grovetown, GA
21 Kerryon Johnson	RB	6-0	204	Jr.	Madison
9 Kam Martin	RB	5-10	182	So.	Port Arthur, TX
32 Malik Miller	RB	5-11	235	So.	Huntsville
39 Robert Muschamp	FB	6-1	257	So.	Rome, GA
99 Spencer Nigh	FB	6-0	269	So.	Magnolia, TX
36 Kamryn Pettway	RB	6-0	237	Jr.	Montgomery
42 Keenan Sweeney	FB	6-0	239	Jr.	Snellville, GA
48 C.J. Tolbert	RB	5-7	187	Jr.	Dadeville
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
3 Nate Craig-Myers	WR	6-2	208	So.	Dade City, FL
11 Kyle Davis	WR	6-2	213	So.	Loganville, GA
83 Ryan Davis	WR	5-9	174	Jr.	St. Petersburg, FL
86 Carson Griffis	WR	5-10	169	Fr.	Homewood
33 Will Hastings	WR	5-10	167	Jr.	Little Rock, AR
89 Griffin King	WR	5-10	174	So.	Atlanta, GA
17 Marquis McClain	WR	6-2	218	Fr.	Crestview, FL
84 Jaylen McGriff	WR	6-0	211	Sr.	Brentwood, TN
35 James Owens Moss	WR	5-9	180	Fr.	Opelika
87 Pace Ozmint	WR	6-1	181	Fr.	Glencoe
37 Logan Rice	WR	6-0	206	Jr.	Rome, GA
81 Darius Slayton	WR	6-2	191	So.	Norcross, GA
4 Jason Smith	WR	6-1	190	Sr.	Mobile
29 Tyler Stovall	WR/H	6-1	218	Sr.	Hokes Bluff
12 Eli Stove	WR	6-0	179	So.	Niceville, FL
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
82 Pete Berryman	TE	6-5	220	Jr.	Birmingham
80 Sal Cannella	TE	6-5	230	So.	Arlington Heights, IL
85 Jalen Harris	TE	6-4	257	Jr.	Montgomery
46 Caleb King	TE	6-3	217	Sr.	Huntsville
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
52 Nick Brahms	OL	6-4	280	Fr.	Navarre, FL
65 Tucker Brown	OL	6-3	290	Jr.	Trussville
67 Tyler Carr	OL	6-5	328	So.	Southside
73 Austin Golson	OL	6-5	314	Sr.	Prattville
59 Brodarious Hamm	OL	6-5	340	Fr.	Griffin, GA
77 Marquel Harrell	OL	6-3	314	So.	Fairburn, GA
64 Mike Horton	OL	6-4	323	So.	Atlanta, GA
78 Darius James	OL	6-4	327	Sr.	Killeen, TX
54 Kaleb Kim	OL	6-4	295	So.	Buford, GA
61 Ryan Meneely	OL	6-2	324	So.	McDonough, GA
72 Prince Micheal Sammons	OL	6-7	296	Fr.	Clarksville, OH
66 Bailey Sharp	OL	6-5	297	So.	Marietta, GA
71 Braden Smith	OL	6-6	305	Sr.	Olathe, KS
76 Prince Tega Wanogho	OL	6-8	300	So.	Elmore
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
9 Byron Cowart	DE	6-3	280	Jr.	Seffner, FL
5 Derrick Brown	DL	6-5	317	So.	Sugar Hill, GA
93 Tyler Carter	DL	6-1	271	So.	Decatur
91 Nick Coe	DL	6-6	270	Fr.	Asheboro, NC
3 Marlon Davidson	DL	6-3	284	So.	Greenville
52 Antwuan Jackson Jr.	DL	6-2	303	Fr.	Ellenwood, GA
62 Jaunta'vius Johnson	DL	6-2	320	So.	Lincoln
56 Tashawn Manning	DL	6-3	315	Fr.	Apopka, FL
96 Sidney Mims	DL	6-4	250	Fr.	Montgomery
95 Dontavius Russell	DL	6-3	310	Jr.	Carrollton, GA
97 Gary Walker	DL	5-11	273	So.	Toccoa, GA
79 Andrew Williams	DL	6-4	285	Jr.	McDonough, GA
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
48 Montavious Atkinson	LB	6-1	217	Jr.	Fairburn, GA
33 K.J. Britt	LB	6-0	235	Fr.	Oxford
57 Deshaun Davis	LB	5-11	246	Jr.	Prichard
41 Josh French	LB	5-11	203	Fr.	Birmingham
4 Jeff Holland	OLB	6-2	255	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
10 Paul James III	LB	6-4	271	Sr.	Miami, FL
51 Richard McBryde	LB	6-1	237	So.	Troy
50 Chase Ritter	LB	5-10	207	Sr.	Wetumpka
32 Sam Sherrod	LB	5-11	192	Fr.	Birmingham
58 Josh Shockley	LB	5-10	218	Jr.	Locust Grove, GA
39 Conner Sibley	LB	5-10	200	So.	Athens, GA
42 Tre' Threat	LB	6-1	243	So.	Mobile
49 Darrell Williams	LB	6-2	247	Jr.	Hoover
30 Tre' Williams	LB	6-2	235	Sr.	Mobile
17 Chandler Wooten	LB	6-2	225	Fr.	Acworth, GA
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
16 Malcolm Askew	DB	5-11	185	Fr.	McCalla
22 John Broussard Jr.	DB	5-11	168	So.	Phenix City
8 Marlon Character Jr.	DB	6-0	186	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
6 Carlton Davis	DB	6-1	202	Jr.	Miami, FL
13 Javaris Davis	DB	5-10	184	So.	Jacksonville, FL
12 Jamel Dean	DB	6-2	211	So.	Cocoa, FL
20 Jeremiah Dinson	DB	6-0	186	So.	Miami, FL
46 Devin Guice	DB	5-8	153	Fr.	Opelika
44 Raymond Lester	DB	5-11	171	So.	Marietta, GA
28 Tray Matthews	DB	6-1	207	Sr.	Newnan, GA
18 Jayvaughn Myers	DB	6-1	188	Fr.	Dade City, FL
14 Stephen Roberts	DB	5-11	188	Sr.	Opelika
45 Jacob Rogers	DB	5-11	206	Fr.	Goodwater
19 Nick Ruffin	DB	6-0	191	Sr.	Duluth, GA
36 Michael Sherwood	DB	5-9	169	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
24 Daniel Thomas	DB	5-11	202	So.	Montgomery
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
38 Daniel Carlson	K	6-4	218	Sr.	Colorado Springs, CO
31 Sage Ledbetter	K/P	6-0	177	Fr.	Auburn
69 Ike Powell	LS	6-3	256	Sr.	Tifton, GA
43 Ian Shannon	K/P	6-3	226	So.	Marietta, GA
53 Clarke Smith	LS	6-3	224	Fr.	Leeds
68 Zach Wade	LS	5-10	207	Jr.	Bremen, GA

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the defense:** "I think Auburn has the best defensive line in the country (despite losing Carl Lawson and Montravius Adams). They have nine NFL players on their D-line. The linebackers are talented; the secondary is good. They have four to five very talented corners and the two safeties are back. The defense is one of the better ones in the country. ... On paper, Auburn is the biggest threat to Alabama in the West."

• **On the offense:** "The offense has a really good quarterback (Baylor transfer Jarrett Stidham). As long as Gus Malzahn stays out of the way and lets (new offensive coordinator) Chip Lindsey develop a plan and call the game, Auburn will be better. The key is the quarterback. He's extremely accurate and very smart. The key is to keep Stidham healthy and the running back, Kamryn Pettway, healthy."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
S. White	11	143.1	133	208	3	63.9	1679	9	48	152.6
J. Johnson	5	111.7	27	47	2	57.4	312	1	56	62.4

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
T. Stevens	11	31	487	15.7	3	48	44.3
R. Davis	13	25	194	7.8	1	23	14.9
E. Stove	12	23	224	9.7	0	55	18.7

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
K. Pettway	10	209	1240	16	1224	5.9	7	64	122.4
K. Johnson	12	182	919	24	895	4.9	11	47	74.6
J. Franklin	13	46	450	20	430	9.3	2	80	33.1

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: T. Matthews 76, T. Williams 67, D. Davis 63
Tackles for loss: C. Lawson 13.5, M. Adams 8.5, D. Davis 7
Sacks: C. Lawson 9, M. Adams 4.5, A. Williams 3
Interceptions: J. Holsey 3, S. Roberts 2, J. Davis 2, D. Thomas 2

247SPORTS TIGERS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Jarrett Stidham, QB
The former Baylor signal-caller was brought in to start immediately and elevate the Auburn offense to its former glory. The 6-2, 210-pounder has an elite arm that could really open up the Tigers' offense. Auburn's success this fall relies heavily on Stidham's overall performance leading the offense.

Calvin Ashley, OT
The 6-6, 310-pound five-star recruit looks as if he could compete for a starting job in year one. The Tigers are solid up front, but Ashley could help this fall. Ashley has great size and was considered one of the nation's top high school tackles.

Tadarian Moultry, LB
The 6-2, 225-pound inside linebacker is an absolute tone-setter on the field. The hard-hitting Moultry plays with aggression and speed when manning the middle of a defense. It will be hard for the Tigers to keep Moultry off the field in year one.

SLEEPER

Alec Jackson, DT
The talented defensive tackle has a world of potential standing 6-5, 270 pounds. Once Jackson gets more developed physically and technically, he has a chance to become a terror on the interior of the defensive line. This was a valuable three-star signee for Auburn.

2018 NEEDS

Auburn will lose three offensive line starters after this coming season, and the Tigers did not meet their numbers in the 2017 class at the position. Look for the offensive line to once again be a huge priority of Auburn in the 2018 recruiting cycle.

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

1	11	11	0
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	23
Average Stars	3.57
Total Stars	82
National Rank: 9	SEC: 4

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Calvin Ashley	OL	6-6	310	✪✪✪✪✪	Washington, DC	St. John's College High School
USA Today All-American… 247Sports.com rated No. 6 offensive tackle and No. 27 player nationally… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
Malcolm Askew	DB	5-11	185	✪✪✪✪	McCalla	McAdory
Enrolled in January… Ranked No. 8 athlete nationally and No. 10 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Two-time All-State… As a senior quarterback, completed 93 of 175 passes for 1,536 yards and 17 touchdowns… Had 238 yards rushing and three touchdowns… Had 11 tackles and one interception.						
Devan Barrett	RB	6-1	195	✪✪✪✪	Tampa, FL	Tampa Catholic
247Sports.com rated No. 11 running back nationally and No. 28 player in Florida… Had 1,507 all-purpose yards as a senior… Had 1,271 yards rushing and 11 touchdowns… Had more than 4,000 total career yards and 44 touchdowns.						
Nick Brahms	OL	6-4	280	✪✪✪✪	Navarre, FL	Navarre
Enrolled in January… Ranked No. 10 offensive guard nationally and No. 27 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Missed senior season due to broken leg.						
K.J. Britt	LB	6-0	235	✪✪✪✪	Oxford	Oxford
Enrolled in January… 247Sports.com rated No. 15 inside linebacker nationally and No. 14 player in Alabama… Two-time All-State… As a senior, had 124 tackles, including 17 tackles for loss, five quarterback sacks and one interception.						
Markaviest Bryant	BUCK	6-4	225	✪✪✪✪	Cordele, GA	Crisp County
Ranked No. 14 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 18 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State… Helped team to state semifinals.						
Sal Cannella	TE	6-5	230	✪✪✪✪	Arlington Heights, IL	Scottsdale C.C. (AZ)
247Sports.com rated No. 2 junior college tight end nationally… Had 29 receptions for 449 yards and seven touchdowns in 2016 at Scottsdale… As a prep senior, had 31 receptions for 521 yards and seven touchdowns.						
Anders Carlson	K	6-3	185	✪✪✪	Colorado Springs, CO	Classical Academy
Ranked No. 1 placekicker nationally and No. 9 player in Colorado by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… As a senior, made 13 of 23 field goals attempted, with a long of 51 yards… Made 49 of 49 extra point attempts.						
Carlito Gonzalez	DB	6-1	195	✪✪✪	Decatur, GA	Stephenson
247Sports.com rated No. 29 safety nationally and No. 38 player in Georgia.						
Noah Igbinoghene	WR	5-11	190	✪✪✪✪	Trussville	Hewitt-Trussville
Ranked No. 40 wide receiver nationally and No. 13 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… All-State… Had more than 1,700 all-purpose yards and 18 touchdowns as a senior.						
Alec Jackson	DL	6-5	270	✪✪✪	Montgomery	Jefferson Davis
247Sports.com rated No. 51 defensive tackle nationally… All-State… Had 138 career tackles, 13.5 quarterback sacks and three fumbles recovered… As a senior, had 60 tackles, including nine tackles for loss, and six quarterback sacks.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Traivon Leonard	DB	6-0	190	✪✪✪	West Palm Beach, FL	Oxbridge Academy
Ranked among top 125 defensive backs nationally and top 150 players in Florida by 247Sports.com… Had 57 career tackles and 10 interceptions.						
T.D. Moultry	LB	6-2	225	✪✪✪✪	Birmingham	Jackson-Olin
247Sports.com rated No. 3 inside linebacker and No. 103 player nationally and No. 3 player in Alabama… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… All-State.						
Jordyn Peters	DB	6-1	185	✪✪✪	Muscle Shoals	Muscle Shoals
Ranked No. 53 safety nationally and No. 36 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com.						
John Samuel Shenker	TE	6-4	240	✪✪✪	Moultrie, GA	Colquitt County
247Sports.com rated among top 75 tight ends nationally by 247Sports.com… All-State… Had 30 receptions for 451 yards and two touchdowns as a senior.						
Jarrett Stidham	QB	6-2	210	✪✪✪✪	Stephenville, TX	Stephenville
Ranked No. 1 junior college quarterback and No. 1 player nationally by 247Sports.com… In 2015 true freshman season at Baylor, completed 75 of 109 passes for 1,265 yards and 12 touchdowns… Three-time prep All-State… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 6,516 prep career yards passing and 80 touchdowns… Had 1,790 yards rushing and 29 touchdowns.						
Bill Taylor	LS	6-4	240	✪✪✪	Tuscaloosa	American Christian Academy
247Sports.com rated No. 2 long snapper nationally… Four-year starter.						
Austin Troxell	OL	6-7	335	✪✪✪✪	Gurley	Madison Academy
Ranked No. 18 offensive tackle nationally and No. 8 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State.						
Tyrone Truesdell	DL	6-3	335	✪✪✪	Augusta, GA	Lucy Laney
247Sports.com rated No. 37 defensive tackle nationally and No. 48 player in Georgia… As a senior, had 39 tackles, including seven tackles for loss, and 2.5 quarterback sacks.						
JaTarvious Whitlow	WR	6-0	205	✪✪✪	LaFayette	LaFayette
Ranked No. 26 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com … Offense/Defense All-American Game Offensive Most Valuable Player… All-State… Had 2,292 yards passing and 29 touchdowns as a senior… Had 2,147 yards rushing and 30 touchdowns.						
Alaric Williams	RB	6-0	195	✪✪✪✪	Southside	Southside
247Sports.com rated No. 10 athlete nationally and No. 12 player in Alabama… As a senior, had 550 yards rushing and seven touchdowns in four games.						
Malik Willis	QB	6-2	188	✪✪✪	Atlanta, GA	Roswell
Enrolled in January… Ranked No. 21 athlete nationally by 247Sports.com… All-State… Had 2,562 yards passing and 1.033 yards rushing with 37 touchdowns, as a senior.						
Chandler Wooten	LB	6-2	225	✪✪✪	Acworth, GA	North Cobb
Enrolled in January… 247Sports.com rated No. 21 outside linebacker nationally… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State… As a senior, had 124 tackles, including 15 tackles for loss.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Carlson takes aim at SEC record

If you would've asked Daniel Carlson where he was going to go to college as a kid, Auburn wouldn't have been mentioned.

"My mom and dad went to Alabama, so me and my younger brother (Anders) were brought up to dislike Auburn by our parents," Carlson said.

Despite the distaste for the Tigers growing up, in a twist of fate, Gus Malzahn and his staff were spot on by recognizing the talent of the older Carlson brother after the rising high school senior was rated the top kicker at one of the country's most prestigious kicking camps.

"I went to a kicking camp, Kohl's Football Kicking Camp, in January 2012, and did really well," Carlson recalled. "It was a two-day camp, and I got ranked No. 1. After they ranked me No. 1, the next day, Auburn called and said, 'Hey, were interested in you' and by the end of the week probably 10 schools had called me."

After the Tigers, the first team to offer, reached out to Carlson, they got a visit. And that visit turned out to be a stepping-stone to what has been a marvelous collegiate career for the Colorado Springs, Colo., native.

Carlson holds 12 school records, including most field goals made (69) and most 50-yard field goals made (8). He ranks second on Auburn's career scoring list (345). He's been a Lou Groza Award finalist in back-to-back years, and his six field goals sparked a season-swinging win over LSU last year.

After debating whether or not to turn pro, Carlson's decision to return to Auburn for his senior year was influenced by the chance to play with Anders, a highly-touted kicker himself who signed with the Tigers in February.

"Yeah, that was part of it," Carlson said. "We never got the chance to do it in high school, to play on the same team, especially on a level like this. Hopefully, I'll get to teach him a few things."

Carlson is 19 field goals away from becoming the SEC's all-time record holder in field goals made. But beating Alabama, which never offered him a scholarship, would be a perfect scenario to cap what Carlson hopes will be a championship season.

"Game-winner against Alabama would be pretty sweet," he said. "But just a big season for this team. I think we look good this year."

PK
Daniel Carlson
Photo by Michael Wade

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/auburn

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

RB KAMRYN PETTWAY

After a breakout sophomore season, Pettway returns to spearhead one of the most lethal rushing attacks in college football. ... Despite making only six starts, Pettway posted the 13th-best single-season rushing total in Auburn history (1,224 yards) and became the first Tiger player since Bo Jackson (1985) to post four consecutive 150-yard games. ... Powerful runner who has the ability to wear down a defense with his violent running style. ... Underrated athlete despite impressive size.

EMERGING STAR

WR NATE CRAIG-MYERS

Arrived at Auburn a year ago as the sixth-best receiver in the high school ranks according to 247Sports, but he was hampered by nagging injuries and finished with four catches for 70 yards and a touchdown as a true freshman. ... According to players and coaches, Craig-Myers was one of the top performers in spring practice. ... Cat-quick route runner who can separate and make plays on the ball.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB JARRETT STIDHAM

The quarterback situation is far from settled, but Stidham's arrival creates competition and gives the Tigers two good options behind center. ... Strong-armed passer who exuded good touch on the deep ball during the A-Day Game. ... Team-first guy who impressed coaches and teammates with his work ethic and natural leadership skills throughout spring practice. ... Completed 16 of 20 passes for 267 yards in the first half of the spring game.

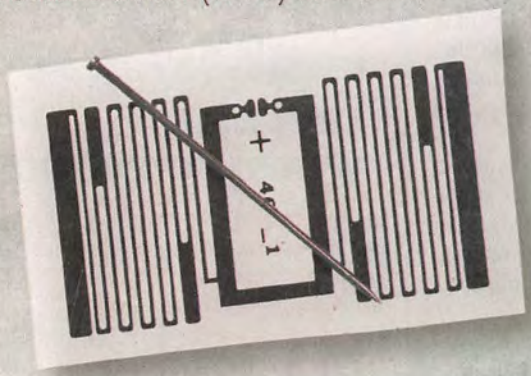
SMALL IS BIG AT HARBERT

AUBURN
UNIVERSITY

RAYMOND J. HARBERT
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

NO PROBLEM TOO BIG. NO SOLUTION TOO SMALL. Picture a dot the size of a pinhead. That's how small a radio frequency identification (RFID) chip is. At the RFID Lab at Auburn University, Harbert is taking that chip and solving big problems that span the business spectrum. In healthcare, manufacturing and retail – the entire supply chain – we're increasing efficiency, reducing errors, deterring theft and tracking, locating, inventorying and identifying products and parts down to a unit level. We work closely with one of a handful of research centers globally to test, set and enforce RFID standards. Harbert is the nexus where industry meets technology solutions.

Bring us your challenges.
We have small (RFID) solutions.



HARBERT.
WHERE BUSINESS HAPPENS.

©2016 EHA - 0019

www.harbert.auburn.edu • (334) 844-4835 • 405 W Magnolia Ave. • Auburn, AL 36849

FLORIDA GATORS

For more coverage of the Gators, visit florida.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Nussmeier **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Randy Shannon **STADIUM:** Ben Hill Griffin: 91,916

GATORS READY TO KICK DOWN DOOR IN ATLANTA

After Florida matched the program's longest SEC title game drought, failing to reach Atlanta from 2010 to 2014, it didn't take long for Jim McElwain to put the Gators back on the map.

In each of his first two seasons, the Gators have won the SEC East. But each time, a more-talented Alabama team crushed Florida in Atlanta.

So the goal for 2017 is simple.

"It's because of the energy every day that we were able to go undefeated in the Swamp, we were able to go to Atlanta back-to-back years," McElwain roared to fans as his SEC East champs were honored this spring. "And because of you guys, when we get back to Atlanta next season, we're going to kick the door down!"

There are questions to answer, though, not the least of which is how McElwain will replace a loaded defense left by former coach Will Muschamp. Eight starters are gone, including several NFL draft picks.

Simply replacing them won't be enough, either. While Florida has remained somewhat competitive in Atlanta through the first half of the past two title games, the inability to move the ball has worn the team down and eventually allowed the floodgates to open on the other side.

The Gators have to make massive strides on offense if they hope to not only reach Atlanta again, but actually have a chance to win once there.

"I think it motivates every player. We try not to listen to what outsiders or people have to say about the offense," quarterback Feleipe Franks said. "We try to focus on our craft and what we need to improve on each and every day. I think we can use that as confidence going into the summer."

There are no longer glaring holes on the offensive line, and the talent, especially at the skill positions, is upgraded.

"I'm excited about this team," McElwain said. "I really like them. I think we're going to be all right.

"We're continuing to get there. Here's the good thing, we're back now to where we've got the roster balance piece there. We're better up front, there's no doubt about it, and I'm excited about our offensive line. I think our explosive playmakers (will help). We've got to stay healthy to be great."

OFFENSE

For the first time in a while, Florida's offense goes into a season with a lot more answers than questions. There are still a few key riddles that must be solved, but the unit returns nine starters.

One big unknown still? Quarterback. The Gators likely will start the year with a new face under center for the eighth straight year. Redshirt freshman Feleipe Franks is the favorite to win the job after emerging from the spring with the lead.

"Like us to be a little more accurate with the ball," McElwain said. "We missed some throws that we're going to have to hit, but we've just got to keep working on that. I thought all the quarterbacks did a pretty decent job competing up front."

Franks will be pushed for the job in fall camp by fellow redshirt freshman Kyle Trask, as well as junior Luke Del Rio. Del Rio started six games in 2016 but missed the spring with shoulder surgery.

Whoever wins the job should have plenty of weapons. Running back Jordan Scarlett returns after rushing for 889 yards a year ago in a deep backfield, while leading receiver Antonio Callaway also returns.

Tyrie Cleveland also provides a deep threat at receiver, while Dre Massey and Brandon Powell offer explosive potential in the slot. Coupled with Franks' strong arm, Florida expects to be able to throw the ball deep a lot more in the fall.

"Those guys aren't afraid to put the ball downfield, there's no doubt about it," McElwain said. "We've got a couple guys that can chase it down. That's fun to see. Obviously I think we've got a chance to really push the ball down the field."

The offensive line returns four starters, as well as multiple other players who picked up starts along the way. It's a deep and veteran unit, anchored by tackles Martez Ivey and Jawaan Taylor. Battles for jobs inside will last into fall camp, with T.J. McCoy, Tyler Jordan, Brett Heggie and Fredrick Johnson all competing.

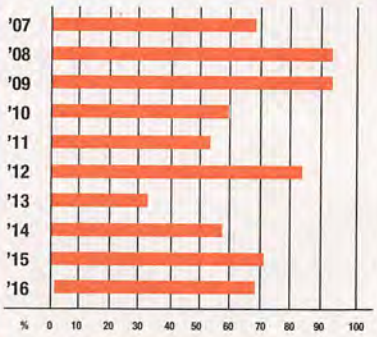
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)	10-3
Sept. 9	NORTHERN COLORADO	6-5
Sept. 16	TENNESSEE	9-4
Sept. 23	at Kentucky	7-6
Sept. 30	VANDERBILT	6-7
Oct. 7	LSU	8-4
Oct. 14	TEXAS A&M	8-5
Oct. 28	vs. Georgia (Jacksonville, FL)	8-5
Nov. 4	at Missouri	4-8
Nov. 11	at South Carolina	6-7
Nov. 18	UAB	0-0
Nov. 25	FLORIDA STATE	10-3

RESULTS

	9-4, 6-2	
W	MASSACHUSETTS	24-7
W	KENTUCKY	45-7
W	NORTH TEXAS	32-0
L	at Tennessee	28-38
W	at Vanderbilt	13-6
W	MISSOURI	40-14
W	vs. Georgia (Jacksonville, FL)	24-10
L	at Arkansas	10-31
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	20-7
W	at LSU	16-10
L	at Florida State	13-31
	SEC Championship Game	
L	vs. Alabama	16-54
	Outback Bowl	
W	vs. Iowa	30-3

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Gainesville, Fla.

2016:
9-4 overall, 6-2 SEC (1st, East)

COACH:
Jim McElwain — At Florida: 19-8, 2 years; overall: 41-24, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
15; 9 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Jordan Scarlett, WR Antonio Callaway, WR Dre Massey, DE CeCe Jefferson, DT Taven Bryan, S Marcell Harris

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Florida returns its best group at the skill positions on offense since 2009 when Tim Tebow had a talented supporting cast to work with. Anchored by Scarlett in the run game and Callaway at receiver, the Gators should have plenty of explosive options if they can simply get the ball to those guys.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Despite returning plenty of experience on the offensive line, the jury is out on whether Florida can generate more push. The Gators appear well on their way to breaking in yet another new quarterback. The defense has big question marks in the front seven, and the secondary faces depth issues at cornerback.

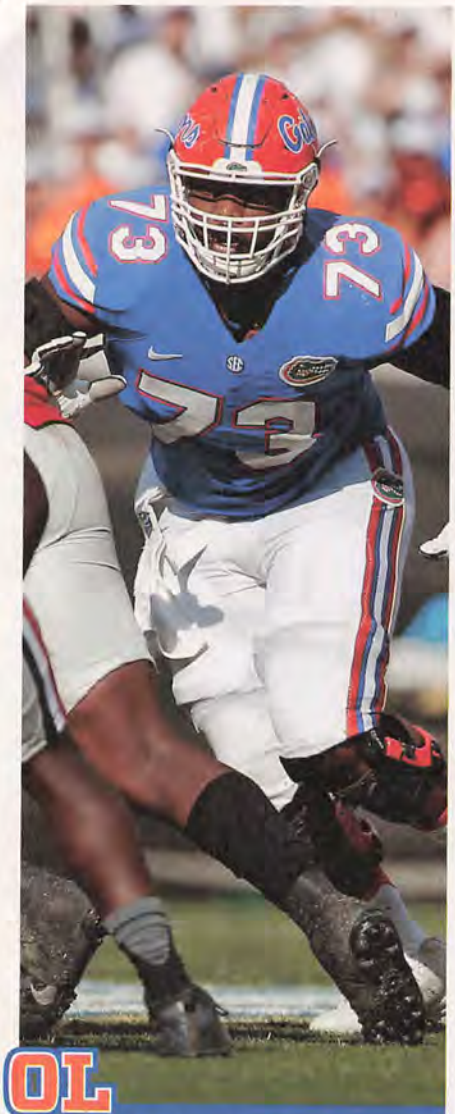
KEY LOSSES:
LT David Sharpe, DT Caleb Brantley, LB Jarrad Davis, CB Teez Tabor, CB Quincy Wilson, S Marcus Maye

OVERVIEW:
This is the year McElwain will have to prove he can win with offense. It's highly unlikely with so much turnover that the defense won't take at least a slight step back, so now it's on McElwain to get the ball rolling with offense, his calling card as a coach. A new quarterback will have plenty to work with, with one of the best skill groups in the SEC.

KEY NUMBER:
64 Collective starts that return on the offensive line. It will need to play like a veteran unit, because McElwain has bemoaned the passive attitude of the unit and lack of finishing punch.

WR
Antonio CALLAWAY

Photo by Gary McCullough/CSM via AP Images



OL

Martez Ivey

Photo by Kim Klement-USA TODAY Sports

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Feleipe Franks	Fr.	Redshirted in 2016 as a former 4-star prospect with a big arm.	Kyle Trask, Fr.
RB	**Jordan Scarlett***	Jr.	Rushed for 889 yards despite getting less than 40% of carries.	Lamical Perine, So.
WR	**Antonio Callaway***	Jr.	First player in school history to score a TD five different ways.	Joshua Hammond, So.
WR	Tyrie Cleveland	So.	Emerged as deep-play threat, averaging 21.3 yards per catch.	Freddie Swain, So.
WR	Dre Massey	Jr.	Explosive slot receiver tore his ACL on opening kickoff in 2016.	**Brandon Powell, Sr.***
TE	**DeAndre Goolsby***	Sr.	55 career catches for 619 yards and four touchdowns.	**C'yontai Lewis, Jr.***
LT	**Martez Ivey***	Jr.	Former 5-star prospect moves from guard to tackle.	Kadeem Telfort, Fr.
LG	**Tyler Jordan***	Jr.	Can play any of the three inside positions on the offensive line.	Brett Heggie, Fr.
C	T.J. McCoy	So.	Began 2016 as third-stringer, started last four games of season.	Tyler Jordan, Jr.
RG	**Fredrick Johnson***	Jr.	6-6, 311-pound lineman who can play tackle or guard.	Nick Buchanan, So.
RT	**Jawaan Taylor***	So.	Started 12 games at tackle, named a Freshman All-American.	Stone Forsythe, Fr.
K	**Eddy Pineiro***	Jr.	Made final 12 FGs in 2016 and finished 21-25 with long of 54.	Jorge Powell, Jr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	CeCe Jefferson	Jr.	Former 5-star expected to play outside more in 2017.	**Jordan Sherit, Sr.***
DT	Taven Bryan	Jr.	Teammates, coaches call him "the Wyoming Wild Man."	Jachai Polite, So.
NT	Khairi Clark	Jr.	Former Army All-American has 32 career tackles.	Kyree Campbell, Fr.
DE	Jabari Zuniga	So.	Led the team with five sacks last season.	Keivonnis Davis, Jr.
LB	Kylan Johnson	So.	Key figure in linebacker rotation during 2017 season.	Jeremiah Moon, Fr.
LB	David Reese	So.	Started four games; named a Freshman All-American.	James Houston, Fr.
LB	Vosean Joseph	So.	Goal-line hit on LSU QB Danny Etling helped turn the game.	Rayshad Jackson, So.
CB	**Duke Dawson***	Sr.	Veteran has started at cornerback, nickel-back and safety.	Marco Wilson, Fr.
CB	Chauncey Gardner	So.	Was named MVP of Outback Bowl after snagging 2 INTs.	Brad Stewart, Fr.
SS	**Marcell Harris***	Sr.	Led the team with 73 tackles a year ago.	Jeawon Taylor, So.
FS	**Nick Washington***	Sr.	Has played in 38 career games with 10 starts.	Quincy Lenton, Fr.
P	**Johnny Townsend***	Sr.	Led nation in punting with a 47.9-yard average.	Tommy Townsend, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

Florida hired a new offensive line coach, Brad Davis from North Texas, to bring more energy to a unit up front that ranked just 106th nationally in yards per carry in 2016, at 3.69. The Gators want to push opponents off the ball, something they've struggled with in recent years.

"The kids are aware. They've been called out. They get it," Davis said.

"They're smart people. They understand the obligation they have to this team in controlling the line of scrimmage and moving people, protecting the quarterback and things of that nature. They're aware, and I've got great kids. They want that. They want to be held accountable. They want to be challenged. They don't shy away from it."

DEFENSE

Florida's staunch defense has carried the team to the SEC title game for the past two seasons, but will personnel losses finally catch up?

The Gators have sent a horde of players to the NFL over the past two years. Come fall, Florida will have to replace seven starters. Ask the players how well they think they can cope with those losses, though, and there's no shortage of confidence.

"Every year we're overlooked, so we're not really worried about that," defensive back Chauncey Gardner said. "At the same time, we know what we've got to do to make everybody notice us. Us losing eight (starters) is not going to matter. We've got eight more that can do the same thing those eight can do."

Florida remains deep up front, even if it hasn't quite identified a difference-maker on the line that demands attention like departed tackle Caleb Brantley. Finding one will be a key focus in fall camp.

The Gators return five very capable defensive ends, led by former five-star prospect CeCe Jefferson and veteran Jordan Sherit. Meanwhile, up-and-coming sophomore Jabari Zuniga actually led the team in 2016 with five sacks.

"We've got some good young players," McElwain said. "Some guys obviously that played last year for us as true freshmen. I think being able to get a pass rush and not having to blitz all the time, I think those defensive ends are going to give that for us."

Fourth-year juniors Taven Bryan and Khairi Clark return inside to anchor the middle of the line.

The linebackers will be young with two senior starters gone, but sophomores David Reese, Vosean Joseph and Kylan Johnson all played extensively as freshmen a year ago. Expectations are sky high for Reese and Joseph, in particular.

"One thing about it, guys that are here are hungry," said new defensive coordinator Randy Shannon.

"One thing when you have young guys

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Martez Ivey OG 6-5 305 5.04 Jr.

After starting the past two seasons at left guard, Ivey will take over at the critical left tackle position in 2017 with former teammate David Sharpe opting to leave early for the NFL.

Ivey is aptly name with vines for arms that should help him in his transition back outside, where he starred in high school, earning the top grade among prep offensive tackles when he signed with Florida in 2015. He has an imposing frame with a thick lower half and surprisingly light feet. He's on his way to living up to the recruiting hype and becoming an All-SEC performer.

Ivey is at his best when he is retreating in pass protection, showing patience, balance and agility to mirror rushers. He shows power to move opponents off the ball in the running game and is quick to climb to the second level.

One concern that shows up on tape: While on the move in the run game, he sometimes gets too far over his skis and struggles to hit moving targets.

2. Antonio Callaway	WR	5-11	197	4.46	Jr.
3. Nick Washington	SS	6-0	197	4.54	rSr.
4. Deandre Goolsby	TE	6-4	245	4.76	Sr.
5. Duke Dawson	CB	5-10	208	4.55	Sr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

and guys who are new to a system, they want to improve. They want to get better. We lost a lot of great players, but we have a lot of guys that we looked at in the bowl game who played in the bowl game, so that's a plus for us. Just got to get better and keep going."

A retooling secondary returns three capable seniors in Duke Dawson, Marcell Harris and Nick Washington, as well as Gardner, the Outback Bowl MVP. Finding a few players among the six freshmen who will arrive this summer who can round out the depth chart will be key, particularly at cornerback.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Florida returns one of the best special teams tandems in the country in kicker Eddy Pineiro and punter Johnny Townsend. Pineiro provided an instant boost to a shaky UF kicking game in 2016, nailing 21 of 25 field-goal attempts, including 11 from 40 yards or more. He helped bail out an offense that struggled mightily in the red zone. He's back for another year and should once again be a weapon.

Not to be outdone, Townsend led the nation in punting average a year ago, tallying an eye-popping 47.9 yards per punt. His ability to flip the field should help protect a young defense.

In the return game, Antonio Callaway took a step back in 2016 after a terrific freshman season as a punt returner, but he still provides an electric option. Dre Massey, who suffered a torn ACL on the opening kickoff a year ago, should compete for the starting job there again.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The one saving grace on an otherwise brutal schedule is that Florida now gets LSU at home after Hurricane Matthew forced the teams to play in Baton Rouge last season. There's no warm-up period for Florida this year, though. The Gators will take on Michigan in the season opener, the first opener played away from The Swamp in 30 years.

Tennessee comes to town two weeks after the Michigan game, before Florida faces a brutal October stretch that includes home games against LSU and Texas A&M and a trip to Jacksonville to take on Georgia. November is much more manageable, with Florida State at home as the lone remaining marquee matchup.

The Michigan game will be key for a young team, though. Win that one and the rest of the slate looks much more manageable.

— Thomas Goldkamp

DL

CeCe Jefferson

Photo by Gary McCullough/CSM via AP Images

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.3	53
Rushing	187.7	41
Passing	179.9	104
Total	367.6	93
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.1	20
Rushing	116.2	13
Passing	213.6	41
Total	329.8	15
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.5	30

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.2	100
Rushing	126.9	112
Passing	207.1	87
Total	334.0	111
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.3	11
Rushing	128.1	25
Passing	182.1	13
Total	310.2	8
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.57	27

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.9	107
Rushing	128.2	113
Passing	215.8	79
Total	344.0	116
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.8	6
Rushing	144.5	T-38
Passing	148.5	2
Total	293.0	5
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	T-49

NOTEBOOK

Randy Shannon will take over as Florida's new defensive coordinator after spending two years on staff as the linebackers coach and co-coordinator. Expect to see some changes from the schemes of former coordinator **Geoff Collins**.

While Collins blitzed routinely using linebackers, Shannon prefers to generate pressure with four down rushers whenever possible, allowing his linebackers to help in coverage. That'll be especially important for Florida this fall as it breaks in a slew of younger defensive backs.

"Here's the thing: If you develop pass rushers, you can always blitz," Shannon said. "But you can't blitz and then say, 'OK now we're going to develop pass rushers.' If you're doing a lot of blitzing and all of a sudden you're not getting there, then your DBs are hanging on the line."

• With three starters gone in the secondary, including All-American cornerback **Jalen Tabor**, Florida is looking to reload. One guy who will definitely be counted on is sophomore **Chauncey Gardner**, who earned Outback Bowl MVP honors after picking off two passes and returning one for a touchdown.

Gardner spent spring practice working as a starting cornerback outside, but his skill set might be more ideally suited for a nickel-back or safety role. Whether he makes a move in fall camp will depend heavily on whether one or two of the six freshmen defensive backs arriving this summer can push for a starting job at cornerback. In any case, Gardner is an elite athlete who will start somewhere.

"It's just something to help the team out," the sophomore said of his move to cornerback. "Wherever they put me, I'm just going to go 100 percent and go all out and just make sure we get the 'W' no matter where I'm at."

• After praising the offensive line throughout the spring, **Jim McElwain** came away a bit less than impressed with the unit's performance in the spring game. The first-team unit had trouble consistently moving the second-team defensive line off the ball, a recurring issue over the last few years.

"I thought they did OK. Disappointed with a couple guys that didn't compete," McElwain said.

GATORS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterback	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
Jake Allen	QB	6-3	200	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale
14 Luke Del Rio	QB	6-1	211	Jr.	Santa Rosa Beach
13 Feleipe Franks	QB	6-6	219	Fr.	Crawfordville
42 Nick Sproles	QB	6-2	203	Fr.	Winter Park
11 Kyle Trask	QB	6-4	238	Fr.	Manvel, TX
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
Malik Davis	RB	5-11	190	Fr.	Tampa
33 Tyriek Hopkins	RB	5-8	177	Fr.	St. Petersburg
Adarius Lemons	RB	6-1	195	Fr.	Clearwater
22 Lamical Perine	RB	5-11	221	So.	Theodore, AL
25 Jordan Scarlett	RB	5-10	213	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale
24 Mark Thompson	RB	6-2	237	Sr.	La Mott, PA
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
81 Antonio Callaway	WR	5-11	197	Jr.	Miami
89 Tyrie Cleveland	WR	6-2	196	So.	Houston, TX
31 Anthony Gigla	WR	5-11	177	So.	Clermont
Daquon Green	WR	6-1	185	Fr.	Tampa
10 Josh Hammond	WR	6-1	186	So.	Hallandale
87 Kalif Jackson	WR	6-4	217	So.	Neptune Beach
43 Glenn Jarriel	WR	5-8	173	Fr.	Okeechobee
9 Dre Massey	WR	5-9	180	Jr.	Greenville, SC
39 Jacob Mesenger	WR	5-9	171	So.	Sunrise
45 Charles Nordman	WR	6-1	180	Fr.	Deland
44 Tucker Nordman	WR	6-1	192	Fr.	Deland
4 Brandon Powell	WR	5-9	184	Sr.	Deerfield Beach
James Robinson	WR	6-4	205	Fr.	Lakeland
16 Freddie Swain	WR	6-0	186	So.	Ocala
83 Rick Wells	WR	6-0	206	Fr.	Jacksonville
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
16 Brian Fallace	TE	6-4	209	So.	Satellite Beach
39 Ryan Ferguson	TE	6-3	229	So.	Largo
88 Kemore Gamble	TE	6-3	241	Fr.	Miami
30 DeAndre Goolsby	TE	6-4	244	Sr.	Derby, KS
46 Harry Gornto V	TE	6-2	203	Fr.	Fort Walton Beach
80 C'yontai Lewis	TE	6-4	231	Jr.	Eutaw, AL
82 Moral Stephens	TE	6-3	249	Jr.	Perry
Offensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
78 Ricardo Benalcazar	OL	6-7	352	Sr.	Miramar
79 Dallas Bruch	OL	6-3	275	Fr.	Clearwater
66 Nick Buchanan	OL	6-2	301	So.	Dunwoody, GA
72 Stone Forsythe	OL	6-7	329	Fr.	Winter Garden
69 Marcus Givens	OL	6-0	275	Fr.	St. Augustine
53 Kavaris Harkless	OL	6-5	310	Jr.	Jacksonville
61 Brett Heggie	OL	6-3	317	Fr.	Mount Dora
73 Martez Ivey	OL	6-5	305	Jr.	Apopka
74 Fred Johnson	OL	6-6	311	Jr.	West Palm Beach
64 Tyler Jordan	OL	6-4	309	Jr.	Jacksonville
59 T.J. McCoy	OL	6-1	308	So.	Clermont
77 Andrew Mike	OL	6-6	301	Jr.	Tucson, AZ
TJ Moore	OL	6-6	290	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
51 Antonio Riles	OL	6-4	313	Jr.	Lawrenceville, GA
75 Tanner Rowell	OL	6-2	275	Fr.	Melbourne
Tedarrell Slaton	OL	6-4	360	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale
65 Jawaan Taylor	OL	6-5	340	So.	Cocoa
76 Kadeem Telfort	OL	6-6	318	Fr.	Miami
71 Nick Villano	OL	6-2	301	Fr.	Wellington
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
98 Luke Ancrum	DL	6-5	262	So.	Sebring
93 Taven Bryan	DL	6-5	293	Jr.	Casper, WY
55 Kyree Campbell	DT	6-3	323	Fr.	Woodbridge, VA
Zachary Carter	DE	6-5	250	Fr.	Tampa
54 Khairi Clark	DL	6-2	319	Jr.	Hollywood
90 Antonneous Clayton	DL	6-3	220	So.	Vienna, GA
Elijah Conliffe	DE	6-4	305	Fr.	Hampton, VA
95 Keivonnis Davis	DL	6-4	241	Jr.	Miami
68 Richerd Desir-Jones	DL	6-4	292	So.	Fort Lauderdale
96 Cece Jefferson	DL	6-1	261	Jr.	Glen St. Mary
99 Jachai Polite	DL	6-2	271	So.	Daytona Beach
97 Justus Reed	DL	6-3	241	Jr.	Clearwater
17 Jordan Sherit	DL	6-4	254	Sr.	Tampa
42 Jordan Smith	DL	6-5	240	Fr.	Lithonia, GA
92 Jabari Zuniga	DL	6-3	245	So.	Marietta, GA
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
Lacedrick Brunson	LB	6-2	210	Fr.	Miami
43 Cristian Garcia	LB	6-1	231	Sr.	Miami
41 James Houston IV	LB	6-1	233	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale
44 Rayshad Jackson	LB	6-0	226	So.	Miami
28 Kylan Johnson	LB	6-1	231	So.	Dallas, TX
11 Vosean Joseph	LB	6-1	226	So.	Miami
84 Camrin Knight	LB	6-3	246	Jr.	Tallahassee
58 Jahim Lawrence	LB	5-11	223	Fr.	Hollywood
Ventrell Miller	LB	6-0	227	Fr.	Lakeland
50 Jeremiah Moon	LB	6-4	218	Fr.	Hoover, AL
45 R.J. Raymond	LB	6-2	248	Jr.	Atlantic Beach
33 David Reese	LB	6-0	244	So.	Farmington, MI
Nick Smith	LB	6-3	210	Fr.	Orlando
46 Will Thomas	LB	5-9	233	Fr.	Dunnellon
59 Danny Weldon	LB	6-1	223	Fr.	Tampa
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
21 McArthur Burnett	DB	5-9	174	So.	Pahokee
Shawn Davis	DB	5-11	190	Fr.	Miami
7 Duke Dawson	DB	5-10	208	Sr.	Cross City
Brian Edwards	DB	6-3	195	Fr.	Hollywood
23 Chauncey Gardner	DB	5-11	204	So.	Cocoa
36 Eddie Giles	DB	5-9	167	Jr.	Jupiter
26 Marcell Harris	DB	6-1	211	Sr.	Orlando
CJ Henderson	CB	6-1	175	Fr.	Miami
27 Quincy Lenton	DB	5-11	202	Fr.	Meridian, MS
12 C.J. McWilliams	DB	5-11	171	Fr.	Miami
48 Edwitch Merisier	DB	5-9	171	Fr.	Lehigh Acres
38 Nick Oelrich	DB	6-2	187	Fr.	Newberry
35 Joseph Putu	DB	6-2	195	Sr.	Providence, RI
30 Garrett Stephens	DB	5-9	188	Jr.	Louisville, KY
Brad Stewart	DB	6-0	190	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
Donovan Stiner	S	6-2	185	Fr.	Bellaire, TX
29 Jeawon Taylor	DB	6-0	187	So.	Montgomery, AL
49 Cameron Town	DB	5-11	183	Jr.	Clearwater
25 Brady Walters	DB	5-11	176	Jr.	Clermont
8 Nick Washington	DB	6-0	197	Sr.	Jacksonville
14 Chris Williamson	DB	5-11	191	Jr.	Gainesville, GA
Marco Wilson	CB	6-0	180	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale
Special Teams	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
48 Brett DioGuardi	LS	6-3	242	Fr.	Windermere
41 Ryan Farr	LS	6-0	223	Jr.	Henderson, NV
86 Jacob Finn	P	6-2	198	So.	Jacksonville
97 Jon Gould	P	6-0	181	Fr.	Elkridge, MD
79 Daniel Justino	K	5-8	160	Fr.	Green Cove Springs
15 Eddy Pineiro	K	6-0	173	Jr.	Miami
98 Jorge Powell	K	5-10	177	Jr.	Coral Gables
49 Jacob Tilghman	LS	6-1	208	Fr.	Daytona Beach
17 Kadarius Toney	ATH	5-11	180	Fr.	Eight Mile, AL
19 Johnny Townsend	P	6-1	211	Sr.	Orlando
88 Tommy Townsend	P	6-1	195	So.	Orlando

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the defense:** "They've lost a lot of good defensive players for a lot of years. Will there be a drop-off? Florida usually doesn't have a drop-off. Florida's in the state of Florida — they will always have good defensive players. But I think they've recruited subpar the last three years and I think it will catch up with them this year. I don't think Jim (McElwain) enjoys recruiting; he won't get his fingernails dirty in recruiting."

• **On recent seasons:** "Jim McElwain has been to Atlanta the only two years he's been at Florida. The problem is, his last two games of the year are against Florida State and the SEC Championship game, and he hasn't won either one. He's 0-4. That's when The Swamp gets full of gators. ... If you take Florida's teams over the last 15 years, the last two would be in the bottom third."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Appleby	9	128.0	127	209	7	60.8	1447	10	98	160.8
L. Del Rio	6	118.7	114	201	8	56.7	1358	8	78	226.3

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Callaway	12	54	721	13.4	3	78	60.1
B. Powell	13	45	387	8.6	2	26	29.8
D. Goolsby	13	38	342	9.0	3	32	26.3

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Scarlett	13	179	907	18	889	5.0	6	46	68.4
L. Perine	13	91	435	14	421	4.6	1	59	32.4
M. Thompson	12	68	310	11	299	4.4	2	36	24.9

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: M. Harris 73, J. Davis 60, A. Anzalone 53
Tackles for loss: C. Brantley 9.5, J. Zuniga 8.5 C. Jefferson 6.5
Sacks: J. Zuniga 5, J. Sherit 3.5, A. Anzalone 3
Interceptions: J. Tabor 4, Q. Wilson 3, C. Gardner 3,

247SPORTS GATORS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Tedarrell Slaton, DT
Florida is thin at the defensive tackle position, but expect the 6-4, 360-pound Slaton to earn snaps there this fall. Slaton is powerful, as expected, but he's also surprisingly athletic for such a massive man. The former Army All-American is one of the more gifted linemen in the nation.

Christopher Henderson, CB
The Miami native brings elite speed and length to the cornerback position. Florida will likely play a true freshman or two in its defensive secondary this fall, and Henderson has the physical tools to earn snaps his first year on campus. Henderson is still new to the position, but has great upside.

Kemore Gamble, TE
Jim McElwain likes to involve his tight end in the offense, and after a dip in production last season, look for this early enrollee to battle for snaps this fall. The versatile 6-3, 241-pound Gamble can be a valuable weapon in the passing attack and is a willing blocker as well.

SLEEPER

Nick Smith, LB
The elite athlete is 6-3, 210 pounds and really came on strong during his senior season of high school. The Gators pounced on the three-star recruit and feel they came away with a steal. Smith has the potential to be a playmaker at the outside linebacker position.

2018 NEEDS

Quarterback has long been an issue for Florida. The Gators are still searching for a game-changer at the position, making it a huge position of need in the 2018 recruiting cycle. Florida wants to add a dynamic signal-caller that can not only beat you with his arm, but also do damage with his legs too.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	11	11	1
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	23
Average Stars	3.43
Total Stars	79
National Rank: 11	SEC: 5

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Jake Allen	QB	6-3	200	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale	St. Thomas Aquinas
247Sports.com rated No. 23 pro-style quarterback nationally… Led team to state championship as a senior… Completed 157 of 258 passes for 2,311 yards and 27 touchdowns with seven interceptions… As a junior, completed 130 of 205 passes for 1,691 yards and 18 touchdowns.						
Lacedrick Brunson	LB	6-2	210	✪✪	Miami	Miami Jackson
As a junior, had 84 tackles (62 solo) and seven quarterback sacks in six games.						
Kyree Campbell	DT	6-5	305	✪✪✪	Woodbridge, VA	Wyoming Seminary Upper School (PA)
Ranked No. 1 prep school player nationally by 247Sports.com… Played in Offense-Defense All-American Game… Had 62 tackles, including 18 tackles for loss, eight quarterback sacks, two interceptions and blocked three kicks in 2016… Prep All-State in 2015.						
Zachary Carter	DE	6-4.5	250	✪✪✪✪	Tampa	Hillsborough
247Sports.com rated No. 3 strongside defensive end nationally… In sophomore and junior seasons, had 149 tackles (86 solo), including 14 tackles for loss, 8.5 quarterback sacks, and five passes broken up.						
Elijah Conliffe	DE	6-4	305	✪✪✪✪	Hampton, VA	Hampton
Ranked No. 12 player in Virginia by 247Sports.com… 2015 Conference Defensive Player of the Year.						
Malik Davis	RB	5-11	190	✪✪✪	Tampa	Jesuit
247Sports.com rated No. 25 running back nationally… All-State… Helped team to 12-1 record and state championship game as a senior… Had 2,469 yards rushing and 33 touchdowns… Had 7,025 career yards rushing and 83 touchdowns… As a junior, had 2,337 yards rushing and 28 touchdowns.						
Shawn Davis	DB	5-11	190	✪✪✪	Miami	Southridge
Ranked No. 43 cornerback nationally and No. 52 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Helped team to 2016 state championship… As a junior, had 27 tackles and two interceptions.						
Brian Edwards	DB	6-3	195	✪✪✪	Hollywood	Miramar
247Sports.com rated No. 58 cornerback nationally… All-State.						
Kemore Gamble	TE	6-3	241	✪✪✪✪	Miami	Southridge
Ranked No. 10 tight end nationally by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state championship in 2016… Had 15 receptions for 184 yards and five touchdowns as a junior.						
Daquon Green	WR	6-1	185	✪✪✪✪	Tampa	Tampa Bay Tech
247Sports.com rated No. 33 wide receiver nationally… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 115 career receptions for 2,255 yards and 26 touchdowns… As a senior, had 41 receptions for 639 yards and nine touchdowns… Had 31 receptions for 734 yards and ten touchdowns as a junior.						
Christopher Henderson	CB	6-1	175	✪✪✪✪	Miami	Columbus
Ranked No. 15 cornerback nationally and No. 24 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… In final two seasons, had 636 yards rushing and seven touchdowns… Scored three additional touchdowns.						
James Houston	LB	6-1	220	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale	American Heritage
247Sports.com rated No. 42 outside linebacker nationally… Did not play senior season due to ACL injury… Had 37 tackles (20 solo), one quarterback sack, one interception, and one fumble caused as a junior.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Adarius Lemons	RB	6-1	195	✪✪✪	Clearwater	Clearwater
Ranked No. 27 running back nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 2,307 career yards rushing and 24 touchdowns… Scored three additional touchdowns.						
Ventrell Miller	LB	6-0	227	✪✪✪	Lakeland	Kathleen
247Sports.com rated No. 35 outside linebacker nationally… As a senior, had 50 tackles and three quarterback sacks… Had 104 tackles, including nine tackles for loss, and five passes broken up as a junior.						
T.J. Moore	OT	6-5	290	✪✪✪✪	Charlotte, NC	Mallard Creek
Ranked No. 25 offensive tackle nationally and No. 5 player in North Carolina by 247Sports.com… All-State.						
James Robinson	WR	6-4	205	✪✪✪✪	Lakeland	Lakeland
247Sports.com rated No. 14 wide receiver nationally and No. 21 player in Florida… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… In three seasons had 26 receptions for 517 yards and five touchdowns.						
Tedarrell Slaton	DL	6-4	360	✪✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale	American Heritage
Ranked No. 3 offensive guard nationally and No. 12 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Helped team to state championships in 2014 and 2016.						
Nick Smith	LB	6-3	210	✪✪✪	Orlando	Dr. Phillips
247Sports.com rated No. 78 outside linebacker nationally… Helped team to state championship game in 2016… As a senior, had 96 tackles, including 15 tackles for loss, three fumbles caused, one fumble recovered, and one interception.						
Brad Stewart	DB	6-0	190	✪✪✪✪	New Orleans, LA	McDonogh 35
Ranked No. 6 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Louisiana Sports Writers Association Defensive Player of the Year in 2016… Helped team to state semifinals… Had 111 tackles, 11 interceptions and 13 passes broken up as a senior.						
Donovan Stiner	S	6-2	185	✪✪✪	Bellaire, TX	Bellaire
247Sports.com rated No. 56 safety nationally… In three seasons, had 156 tackles (80 solo), three quarterback sacks, two interceptions, and two fumbles caused… Had 56 tackles, including three tackles for loss, one quarterback sack and two interceptions as a senior… Scored two defensive touchdowns… As a junior, had 60 tackles, including four tackles for loss, and one quarterback sack.						
Kadeem Telfort	OL	6-6	310	✪✪✪✪	Miami	Booker T. Washington
Ranked No. 22 offensive tackle nationally and No. 32 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state semifinals in 2016.						
Kadarius Toney	ATH	6-0	180	✪✪✪	Eight Mile, AL	Blount
247Sports.com rated No. 24 athlete nationally and No. 20 player in Alabama… All-State… As a senior, had 2,894 yards passing and 32 touchdowns… Had 894 yards rushing and 15 touchdowns… Had 3,604 yards passing and 37 touchdowns as a junior… Had 896 yards rushing and 16 touchdowns.						
Marco Wilson	CB	6-0	180	✪✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale	American Heritage
USA Today All-American… Ranked No. 28 cornerback nationally and No. 30 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state championships in 2014 and 2016… Had 20 tackles and three interceptions, returning one for touchdown, as a senior… Missed junior season due to ACL surgery.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Franks Developing into Gunslinger

A year ago, Feleipe Franks sat on the bench and watched as a true freshman as Florida's quarterbacks struggled to consistently move the offense.

He just wasn't ready.

That was evident very early on. Franks' first spring game was an abject disaster. He threw three interceptions on his first four passes. He looked every bit the part of a freshman playing his first snaps at the college level. Fast forward a year and he's now in the driver's seat in the battle to become Florida's starting quarterback.

"I think the main thing was it was just new. New offense," Franks said. "I mean you learn everything new, learn your players. Now I've been here a whole season and you know your players, you know your offense. Everything's clicking, everything's rolling, so it's a lot more fun to go out there and just play the game."

Coach Jim McElwain, who is often reserved about indicating where he's leaning in certain position battles, made it clear coming out of spring ball that Franks is ahead.

He pointed out why following the team's spring game, when Franks completed 8 of 14 passes for 119 yards and a touchdown, with no interceptions.

"I think his consistency," McElwain said. "Probably a little bit of his escape-ability, believe it or not, which helps. He's kind of a sneaky athlete. I thought that that was something that kind of helped him."

At 6-6, 219 pounds, Franks has prototypical size and arm strength. His accuracy must continue to improve, as well as his ability to scan a defense.

"I think one of the biggest things for me will be getting through my progressions," Franks said. "I think continuing to work on that, footwork, everything ... everything about that position needs to be sharp in order to play it. I think I'm going to keep working on that."

QB **Feleipe Franks**

Photo by Scott Kinser/Cal Sport Media via AP Images

Heading into the summer, there's one key thing that separates Franks from fellow redshirt freshman Kyle Trask and junior Luke Del Rio: His teammates simply seem to gravitate toward him.

He's a confident gunslinger, and it's why he's the favorite to become Florida's next starting quarterback.

"I have the most confidence in the world in every throw that I make," Franks said. "That's the mindset I go into (for a) game. I have all the confidence in the world in myself and I'll keep that."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/florida

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

WR ANTONIO CALLAWAY

Has led Florida in receiving in each of the last two years, totaling 650-plus yards each season. ... Became first player in school history to score a touchdown five different ways; passing, rushing, receiving, kick return, punt return. ... Went through first spring practice ever in 2017 after being suspended a year ago. ... With 89 catches in his first two seasons, only Jabar Gaffney (138) and Percy Harvin (93) have more at UF through two years.

EMERGING STAR

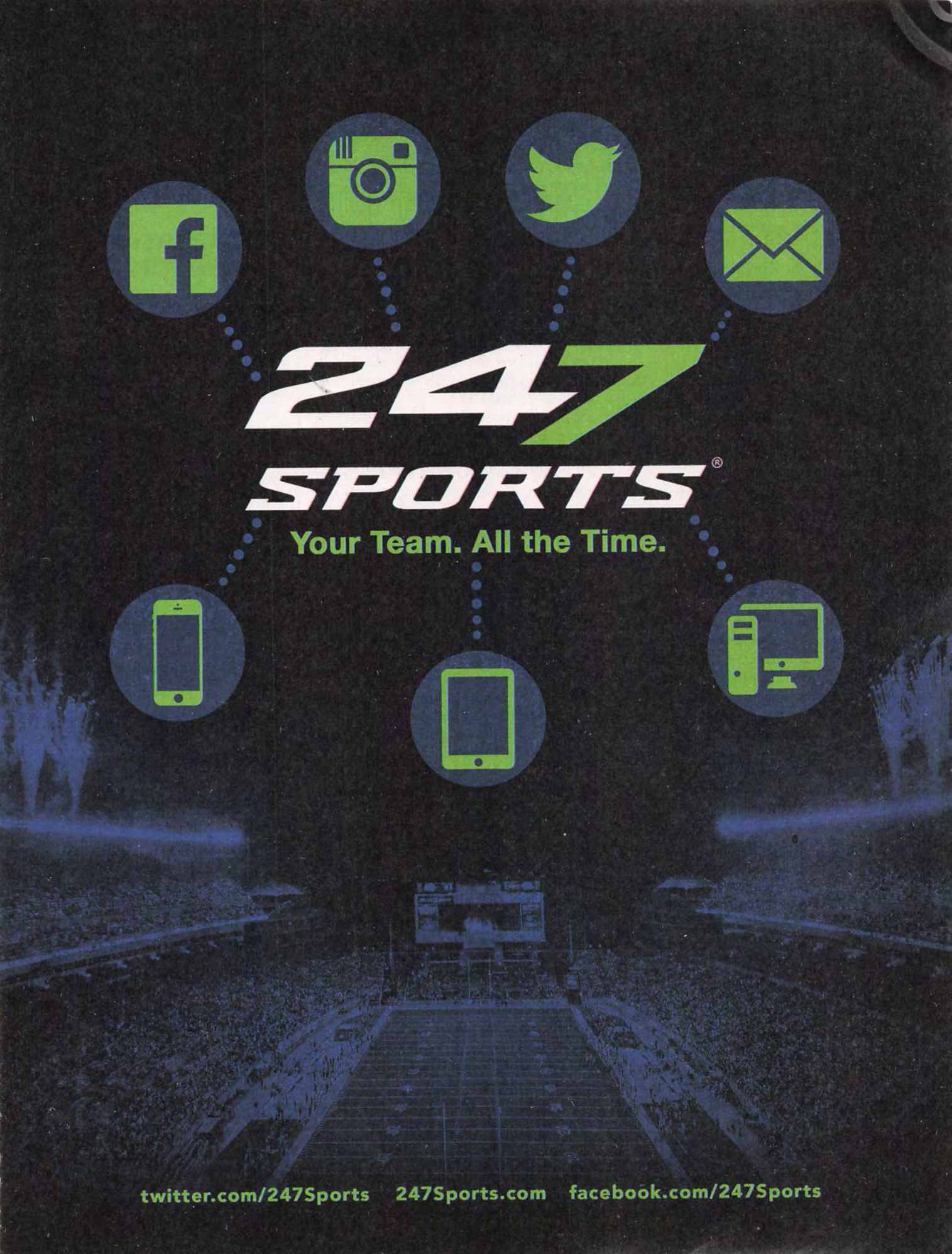
LB VOSEAN JOSEPH

Made one of the signature plays of the 2016 season when he slammed LSU QB Danny Etling at the goal line short of the end zone. ... Picked up his lone start in the Outback Bowl, recording six tackles, one tackle for a loss and a pass break-up. ... Played on the 2016 U.S. Under-19 National Team in the International Bowl against Canada. ... Named first-team all-state in Florida in 6A in 2015.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB/ATH KADARIUS TONEY

Early enrollee arrived in spring and impressed coaches with his electric play-making ability. ... Will get a package to run as a wildcat quarterback as a true freshman. ... Finished his senior season in Alabama with 47 total touchdowns as a dual-threat quarterback. ... Was named the Offensive MVP of AL.com's 2016 All-Coastal Alabama team. ... Ran five times for 74 yards in team's spring game.


247 SPORTS®
Your Team. All the Time.
twitter.com/247Sports
247Sports.com
facebook.com/247Sports

GEORGIA BULLDOGS

For more coverage of the Bulldogs, visit georgia.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Chaney **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Mel Tucker **STADIUM:** Sanford Stadium: 92,746

DAWGS RISING: SAME GUYS, NEW VIBE IN ATHENS

Year 2 of the Kirby Smart Era at Georgia looks much like the inaugural season. Almost all of the key personnel are back. The defense lost just one starter. The offense returns tantalizing skill players.

Stop the comparisons right there.

While Smart's debut season was less than scintillating, there's a noticeably different vibe this year. The Bulldogs still have a ways to go, but the outlook is much more hopeful.

"It is a big difference, honestly," said linebacker Natrez Patrick. "Everybody is comfortable and knows what to expect. Everybody knows his expectations and we are ready to take it to the next level. The continuity is not only us; the coaches have a better feel for all of us."

That's the way it should be in the second year.

"I do think from a standpoint of our system we're in a much better place," Smart said.

This is most evident at the most visible position on the field. Quarterback Jacob Eason is no longer a freshman just trying to learn his way around campus, let alone lead an offense of upperclassmen. He's a sophomore who has been through the rigors of an SEC schedule.

Eason is taking command in the huddle and on the sidelines, something he didn't do much as a freshman.

"He's not afraid to bark at guys when he needs to and stuff like that," tight end Jeb Blazevich said. "It's great seeing him come out of his shell and really start to emerge as a vocal leader."

Ironically, some of that — maybe a lot — can be attributed to the presence of another freshman quarterback, one not nearly as quiet. Jake Fromm has challenged Eason for the starting job from Day One of being on campus. While it would be surprising for Fromm to surpass Eason, the competition has been healthy.

"He's a great competitor," Smart said of Fromm.

"He loves the game. In the huddle, he's got spirit — talking to the linemen. He gets excited. I had to jump him because he threw a touchdown pass in the first scrimmage and started yelling at the defensive end. I told him, 'We don't do that here. We don't talk to the opponent.'

"I don't want to take the fire out of the kid, but he's got that in him. He's got a little moxie about him."

OFFENSE

The offense has lots of questions to answer. Is Jacob Eason ready to take command of the offense? Can the Dawgs cobble together a cohesive offensive line? Will Terry Godwin fill the void created by Isaiah McKenzie's early departure to the NFL?

But the only question at running back is how to get everyone involved.

The surprising decisions by Nick Chubb and Sony Michel to return for their senior seasons left offensive coordinator Jim Chaney and running backs coach Dell McGee with a pleasant problem. Most teams would love to have Chubb, Michel, Brian Herrien or five-star signee D'Andre Swift. Oh, and let's not forget Elijah Holyfield, whose freshman season last year was hampered by injuries.

There could be some interesting combinations to keep defenses guessing. Michel or Herrien could line up as a slot receiver. Chubb, a great blocker, even lined up at fullback a few times last season.

Back to those other questions ...

While much of Georgia's offensive struggles were tied to Eason's inexperience, he certainly could have had more help. The receivers must improve in getting separation in their route-running and reduce their drops. Godwin regressed a bit as a sophomore. He's too talented to not be one of the top slot receivers in the SEC.

Riley Ridley has plenty of ability but needs to develop. His arrest for marijuana possession in March will force him to miss the season opener against Appalachian State. Javon Wims made steady improvement late in the season.

With four-receiver sets and injuries, Georgia needs more players to step up. The lack of depth prompted the coaches to take a long look at sophomore Mecole Hardman, whom they'd rather play at cornerback. The door is wide open for freshmen Jeremiah Holloman, Mark Webb and Trey Blount.

One area where depth is not an issue is tight end. Isaac Nauta has a chance to be one of the top players in the country. Jeb Blazevich has added bulk since he caught 18 passes as a true freshman, transforming into more of a blocking tight end. But he catches

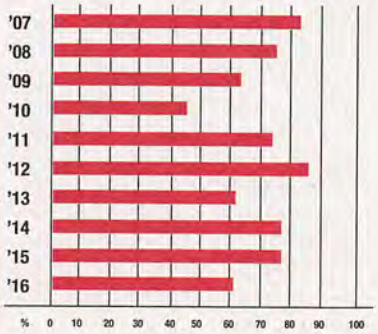
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	APPALACHIAN STATE	10-3
Sept. 9	at Notre Dame	4-8
Sept. 16	SAMFORD	7-5
Sept. 23	MISSISSIPPI STATE	6-7
Sept. 30	at Tennessee	9-4
Oct. 7	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Oct. 14	MISSOURI	4-8
Oct. 28	vs. Florida (Jacksonville, FL)	9-4
Nov. 4	SOUTH CAROLINA	6-7
Nov. 11	at Auburn	8-5
Nov. 18	KENTUCKY	7-6
Nov. 25	at Georgia Tech	9-4

RESULTS

8-5, 4-4		
W	vs. North Carolina	33-24
W	NICHOLLS STATE	26-24
W	at Missouri	28-27
L	at Ole Miss	14-45
L	TENNESSEE	31-34
W	at South Carolina	28-14
L	VANDERBILT	16-17
L	vs. Florida (Jacksonville, FL)	10-24
W	at Kentucky	27-24
W	AUBURN	13-7
W	LOUISIANA	35-21
L	GEORGIA TECH	27-28
	Liberty Bowl	
W	vs. TCU	31-23

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Athens, Ga.

2016:
8-5, 4-4 SEC (T-2nd, East)

COACH:
Kirby Smart — At Georgia and overall: 8-5 overall, 1 year

RETURNING STARTERS:
18; 5 offense, 11 starters on two-deep defense, kicker, punter

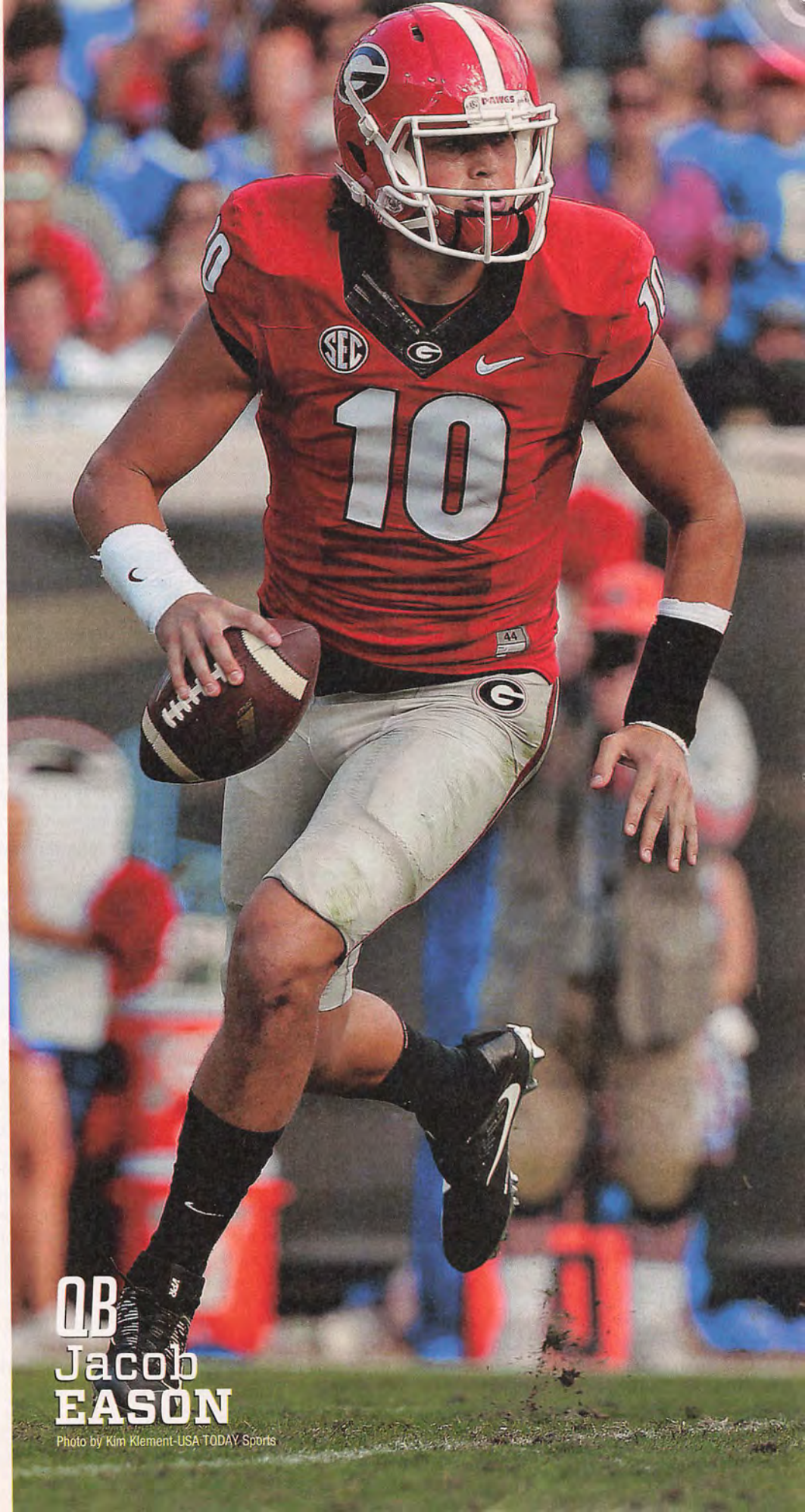
PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jacob Eason, RB Sony Michel, RB Nick Chubb, TE Isaac Nauta, DT Trenton Thompson, ILB Roquan Smith, OLB Lorenzo Carter, OLB Davin Bellamy, FS Dominic Sanders

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The defense should be strong and possibly even dominant, especially if Thompson (shoulder) is healthy. The stable of running backs is as deep as just about any team in the country, with Chubb, Michel, Brian Herrien and freshman D'Andre Swift. Nauta has a chance to be great.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The O-line remains unsettled and unproven. The Bulldogs are especially suspect at tackle. Eason must improve his passing accuracy and make quicker decisions. The receivers must become more reliable and minimize critical drops.

KEY LOSSES:
WR/PR Isaiah McKenzie, OT Greg Pyke, OT Tyler Catalina, DB Maurice Smith, SS Quincy Mauger

OVERVIEW:
The Bulldogs can't make the excuse of being young any more. They return experience in every area on both sides of the ball, especially on defense, where every returning starter is a senior or junior. Even with their problems on the O-line and uncertainty in the passing game, there's no reason for this team to not win 10 games and take the SEC East because the schedule is lenient. But the same could have been said last year when the team underachieved.



QB
Jacob
EASON

Photo by Kim Klement-USA TODAY Sports

Dominick Sanders

Photo by Andy Altenburger/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Jacob Eason***	So.	Needs to take command of the offense in 2nd year.	Jake Fromm, Fr.
RB	**Nick Chubb***	Sr.	3,424 career rushing yards second only to Hershel.	Sony Michel, Sr.
FB	Christian Payne	Sr.	Great blocker who plays a key role in run game.	Turner Fortin, So.
WR	Terry Godwin	Jr.	73 career catches, but needs to be more consistent.	Riley Ridley, So.
WR	Javon Wims	Sr.	Played better late in season; should improve.	Michael Chigbu, Jr.
TE	Isaac Nauta	So.	Freshman All-American with 29 catches, 3 TDs.	**Jeb Blazevich, Sr.***
LT	**Isaiah Wynn***	Sr.	Team's best OL, could play anywhere up front.	D'Marcus Hayes, Jr.
LG	Pat Allen	So.	Won G-Day start after a solid spring performance.	Kendall Baker, Jr.
C	**Lamont Gaillard***	Jr.	Started all 13 games at RG last season.	Thomas Swilley, Sr.
RG	Solomon Kindley	Fr.	Powerful blocker has the size the coaches want.	Chris Barnes, So.
RT	Dyshon Sims	Sr.	Has started at OG, but is moving outside.	Aulden Bynum, Sr.
K	**Rodrigo Blankenship***	So.	Made game-winning kick against Kentucky.	David Marvin, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Jonathan Ledbetter	Jr.	Made an impact in midseason after suspension.	David Marshall, So.
NT	**John Atkins***	Sr.	Does the dirty work inside tying up blockers.	DaQuan Hawkins-Muckle, Jr.
DT	**Trenton Thompson***	Jr.	Coming off shoulder surgery; 9.5 tackles for loss.	Julian Rochester, So.
LB	**Lorenzo Carter***	Sr.	Five sacks, 13 QB pressures last season.	D'Andre Walker, Jr.
LB	**Roquan Smith***	Jr.	Team leader with 95 tackles plus five pass break-ups.	**Reggie Carter, Sr.***
LB	**Natrez Patrick***	Jr.	Great lateral pursuit with quick burst inside.	Tae Crowder, So.
LB	**Davin Bellamy***	Sr.	17 QB pressures led team; also had five sacks.	D'Andre Walker, Jr.
CB	**Malkom Parrish***	Sr.	Led team with nine passes broken up in 2016.	Tim Hill, Sr.
CB	**Deandre Baker***	Jr.	Won starting job midway through last season.	Tyrique McGhee, So.
SS	**Aaron Davis***	Sr.	30 career starts, will play STAR in nickel defense.	J.R. Reed, So.
FS	**Dominick Sanders***	Sr.	Big-time playmaker with 12 career INTs.	Richard LeCounte III, Fr.
P	**Marshall Long***	So.	Dislocated kneecap cut short his freshman season.	Cameron Nizialek, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

the ball in traffic and can still get behind linebackers. Jackson Harris could start for a lot of teams. Charlie Woerner is one of the best athletes on the team and can line up outside.

The line had to be rebuilt with the loss of three starters. Isaiah Wynn and Lamont Gaillard are the only returning starters, and both changed positions. Wynn moved from guard to left tackle; Gaillard from guard to center.

Dyshon Sims moved to right tackle, with Solomon Kindley getting the first shot at right guard. Pat Allen won the job at left guard. That's bound to be fluid through the first half of the season.

DEFENSE

Georgia's defense has made huge strides in the past three seasons, first under Jeremy Pruitt in 2014 and '15, then under Mel Tucker last season. The Bulldogs ranked 16th in the nation and fourth in the SEC in total defense, allowing 327.5 yards per game last season, and should be even stronger with 10 returning starters.

But to label this a dominant defense might be a bit premature. Especially after the defense got pushed around most of spring practice by a rebuilding offense.

But, no doubt, they are deeper and more talented up front than they've been in recent memory. Tackle Trenton Thompson had three sacks in the Liberty Bowl win over TCU. There's cause for concern, though, as he had offseason shoulder surgery and then a reaction to medication that required him to take a medical withdrawal from classes.

Thompson's well-being is the far greater concern, but his presence on the field is also important. Julian Rochester made an impact as a freshman playing behind, and sometimes beside, Thompson.

End Jonathan Ledbetter missed the first six games due to personal issues but made progress every game and provided a pass-rushing presence. David Marshall is also emerging. John Atkins creates a disturbance in the middle. DaQuan Hawkins-Muckle can play all three spots, giving new defensive line coach Tray Scott abundant options.

Linebacker has been Georgia's strength in recent years, and the Dawgs are again blessed with talent.

Seniors Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy anchor the outside spots. Neither has been as dominant as many thought they would be, but both have been productive players, combining for 17.5 sacks and 65 quarterback pressures in their careers, most of which was spent behind Jordan Jenkins and Leonard Floyd.

If they think they are first-round talent like Jenkins and Floyd, they must prove it this season. They also need to stay healthy, as there is no proven depth behind them.

Depth is not a problem inside with juniors Roquan Smith and Natrez Patrick and senior Reggie Carter providing essentially three starters for two spots. Smith led the

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Nick Chubb RB 5-10 228 4.54 Sr.

Chubb surprised many with the decision to return to Georgia for the 2017 season after proving the health of his surgically-repaired knee with 1,130 rushing yards, including eight touchdowns.

The same vision, agility, power and speed that helped Chubb average 7.3 yards against primarily SEC competition over his first two seasons was still evident last year. So, too, was his toughness and determination, including during an inspirational opener in which he galloped for a season-high 222 yards (on 30 carries) to power Georgia past North Carolina.

Though his compact frame indicates raw power, Chubb also shows excellent vision, balance and lateral cuts to elude defenders. Going back to that North Carolina game, he immediately showed quick, confident cuts and acceleration coming back from the knee injury.

The question with Chubb has never been talent or toughness and it's no longer health. With 562 career touches already, however, there will be questions as to how much punishment his body has absorbed at the college level.

Heading into this season, NFLDraftScout.com ranks Chubb as the second-best senior running back behind Oregon's Royce Freeman.

2. Dominick Sanders	FS	6-0	193	4.54	Sr.
3. Trenton Thompson	DT	6-4	295	5.02	Jr.
4. Jeb Blazevich	TE	6-5	242	4.73	Sr.
5. Sony Michel	RB	5-11	222	4.56	Sr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

team in tackles and could push for All-SEC honors. Early enrollee Monty Rice had an impressive spring and Nate McBride joins the team in August to provide some depth.

The secondary is also loaded with a blend of experience and some talented newcomers. Senior free safety Dominick Sanders needs five interceptions to break Jake Scott and Bacarri Rambo's school record of 16. Aaron Davis moved from cornerback to strong safety, which allowed Deandre Baker a chance to play opposite Malkolm Parrish.

The one loss was a big one. Maurice Smith, who played "STAR," was arguably Georgia's best defensive player after transferring from Alabama. His pick-six was a key play in the win over Auburn.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Isaiah McKenzie's departure left a void as he set school records for punt return TDs (five) and overall returns for TD (six). Terry Godwin has some experience on punt returns; Mercole Hardman will get an opportunity as will several others.

The Dawgs also must find a new kick returner with Reggie Davis leaving. Hardman and Sony Michel are the top candidates there. This may be a way to get freshman D'Andre Swift on the field.

Placekicker Rodrigo Blankenship hit 14 of 18 field-goal attempts last season, but will be pushed by senior transfer David Marvin. Likewise, Marshall Long won the punting job as a freshman, averaging 38.7 yards per attempt, but was injured and will be challenged by Cameron Nizialek, another senior transfer.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The Bulldogs have a reasonable chance to start 4-0. Opening with Appalachian State should be easier than playing North Carolina, as they did last year. They visit Notre Dame for the first time ever. Will the Irish be improved? Then they have back-to-back games against other Bulldogs — Samford, then Mississippi State.

That's followed by three straight division games at Tennessee, at Vanderbilt and home against Missouri — against whom the Dawgs are a combined 3-3 over the past two seasons, with two of those wins by a combined four points. They have a week off before the schedule gets tougher.

After the Florida game in Jacksonville, they play South Carolina at home — the latest the two teams have met since 1980. They close out November at Auburn, home against Kentucky and at Georgia Tech.

— Guerry Clegg

RB **Sony Michel**

Photo by Paul Abell via AP

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	41.3	8
Rushing	257.8	11
Passing	199.9	88
Total	457.8	28
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.7	16
Rushing	166.8	61
Passing	170.4	5
Total	337.2	17
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 16	+ 1.2	4

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.3	85
Rushing	192.2	38
Passing	185.1	104
Total	377.2	83
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.9	8
Rushing	149.5	42
Passing	156.5	1
Total	305.9	7
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	T-39

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.5	102
Rushing	191.2	50
Passing	193.5	97
Total	384.7	87
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.0	T-35
Rushing	143.7	36
Passing	183.8	16
Total	327.5	16
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	T-18

NOTEBOOK

As impressive as **Kirby Smart's** first full-year signing class was, it will be hard for freshmen to crack the starting lineup. The area where the newcomers could make the biggest impact is offensive line. That's because only three players — **Isaiah Wynn, Lamont Gaillard and Dyshon Sims** — appear assured of starting jobs, and all three of them could play multiple positions.

D'Marcus Hayes (Mississippi Gulf Coast CC) was an early enrollee and moved up to second-team left tackle. The Dawgs will add four freshmen to the mix in August. If one of the freshmen — **Isaiah Wilson** seems to be the best candidate — or Hayes could win the job at either tackle, Wynn or Sims could return to guard.

Coaches always prefer to redshirt offensive linemen. But Smart was with Alabama in 2014 when **Cam Robinson** started at left tackle as a true freshman on a team that made the College Football Playoff.

• The Dawgs signed five high school offensive linemen, but D'Antne Demery was released from his letter of intent after he was arrested on a domestic violence incident the night of the G-Day game. Demery had an argument with the mother of his child. UGA announced the following day that Demery had been released.

• One lineman who has emerged is **Pat Allen**. He played well enough to win — at least for now — the job at left guard, which allowed Sims to move to tackle.

• With nickel coverage so prominent now, the STAR defensive back is considered a starting position. Maurice Smith, who transferred from Alabama, will be hard to replace. Smart indicated that it could be a tag-team approach with senior **Aaron Davis**, sophomore **Tyrique McGhee** and freshman **Deangelo Gibbs** sharing time.

• One player who could have a breakout season is defensive end **Jonathan Ledbetter**. He seems to have matured considerably after his four-game suspension last year for a DUI. He's physically more developed.

"Honestly everybody says I look skinnier, but I weigh 275-280," Ledbetter said. "I don't know how it looks, but it looks pretty good, I guess."

BULLDOGS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks		Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
10	Jacob Eason	QB	6-5	235	So.	Lake Stevens, WA
11	Jake Fromm	QB	6-2	225	Fr.	Warner Robins
2	Sam Vaughn	QB	6-3	204	Jr.	Fort Pierce, FL
Running Backs		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
27	Nick Chubb	TB	5-10	228	Sr.	Cedartown
36	Dante Dixon	RB	5-7	170	Sr.	Dacula
33	Ian Donald-McIntyre	RB	5-10	207	Fr.	Fayetteville
49	Turner Fortin	FB	6-1	231	So.	Johns Creek
35	Brian Herrien	RB	6-0	210	So.	Douglasville
13	Elijah Holyfield	RB	5-11	215	So.	College Park
24	Prather Hudson	RB	5-11	188	Fr.	Columbus
22	Avery McNeely	TB	5-8	174	Sr.	Athens
1	Sony Michel	TB	5-11	222	Sr.	Plantation, FL
43	Nick Moore	FB	6-3	250	Jr.	Snellville
47	Christian Payne	FB	6-1	242	Sr.	Athens
Wide Receivers		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
26	Patrick Burke	WR	6-3	197	Fr.	Marietta
82	Michael Chigbu	WR	6-2	213	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
19	Willie Erdman	WR	5-10	191	Fr.	Merritt Island, FL
5	Terry Godwin	WR	5-11	185	Jr.	Hogansville
4	Mecole Hardman	ATH	5-11	183	So.	Bowman
9	Jeremiah Holloman	WR	6-2	195	Fr.	Covington
86	Davis Kelly	WR	6-3	207	Fr.	Alpharetta
17	Josh Moran	WR	6-2	193	Fr.	Alpharetta
84	Wyatt Payne	WR	6-1	181	So.	Dublin
8	Riley Ridley	WR	6-2	197	So.	Coconut Creek, FL
29	Cooper Saunders	WR	6-2	195	Fr.	Athens
3	Tyler Simmons	WR	6-0	206	So.	Powder Springs
2	Jayson Stanley	WR	6-2	207	Jr.	Fairburn
25	Steven Van Tiflin	WR	6-1	207	Jr.	Saginaw, MI
23	Shakenneth Williams	WR	6-1	208	Sr.	Macon
6	Javon Wims	WR	6-4	215	Sr.	Miami, FL
Tight Ends		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
83	Jeb Blazevich	TE	6-5	242	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
85	Jordan Davis	TE	6-4	240	Sr.	Thomson
88	Jackson Harris	TE	6-6	247	Jr.	Columbia, TN
44	Justin Hurston	TE	6-4	221	Fr.	Stockbridge
87	Miles McGinty	TE	6-3	221	Jr.	Savannah
18	Isaac Nauta	TE	6-4	246	So.	Buford
29	Lucas Stone	TE	6-4	225	Sr.	Independence, KY
89	Charlie Woerner	TE	6-5	251	So.	Tiger
Offensive Lineman		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
58	Pat Allen	OL	6-4	290	So.	Reisterstown, MD
65	Kendall Baker	OT	6-6	287	Jr.	Atlanta
61	Chris Barnes	OL	6-3	288	So.	Leesburg
94	Michael Barnett	OL/DT	6-4	304	So.	Dorchester, SC
70	Aulden Bynum	OT/TE	6-5	295	Sr.	Valdosta
74	Ben Cleveland	OL	6-6	340	So.	Toccoa
68	Sean Fogarty	OL	6-4	291	Jr.	Savannah
53	Lamont Gaillard	OG	6-2	288	Jr.	Fayetteville, NC
71	Daniel Gothard	OL	6-6	327	Fr.	Dunwoody
63	Sage Hardin	OL	6-6	291	So.	Atlanta
78	D'Marcus Hayes	OL	6-5	315	Jr.	Madison, MS
66	Solomon Kindley	OL	6-4	341	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
67	Sam Madden	OL	6-6	334	So.	Barnegat, NJ
57	Shahed Noorollahi	OL	6-2	310	Jr.	Lawrenceville
55	Dyshon Sims	OG	6-4	290	Sr.	Valdosta
75	Thomas Swilley	OG	6-3	318	Sr.	Athens
79	Allen Williams	OL	6-7	335	Fr.	Baxley
77	Isaiah Wynn	OG	6-2	302	Sr.	St. Petersburg, FL

Defensive Linemen		Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
97	John Atkins	NT	6-4	308	Sr.	Thomson
76	Michail Carter	DL	6-3	295	So.	Jackson
52	Tyler Clark	DL	6-4	305	So.	Americus
57	Alex Essex	DT	6-5	272	Jr.	Richmond, VA
93	Carson Hall	DL	6-5	272	Sr.	Dallas
96	DaQuan Hawkins-Muckle	DT	6-4	318	Jr.	Atlanta
13	Jonathan Ledbetter	DE	6-4	277	Jr.	Tucker
5	Julian Rochester	DL	6-5	304	So.	Powder Springs
78	Trenton Thompson	DT	6-4	295	Jr.	Albany
92	Justin Young	DE	6-4	279	So.	Loganville
Linebackers		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
48	Austin Beauchamp	ILB	6-1	230	Jr.	Commerce
17	Davin Bellamy	OLB	6-5	240	Sr.	Chamblee
11	Keyon Brown	OLB	6-3	257	Jr.	Wauchula, FL
45	Reggie Carter	ILB	6-1	230	Sr.	Snellville
7	Lorenzo Carter	OLB	6-6	242	Sr.	Norcross
30	Tae Crowder	ILB	6-3	228	So.	Hamilton
55	Jacob Gross	ILB	6-0	228	Jr.	Molena
47	Daniel Harper	OLB	6-1	215	Jr.	Atlanta
46	Michael Keene	OLB	6-2	223	Fr.	Savannah
25	Jaleel Laguins	OLB	6-2	220	So.	Watkinsville
91	Chauncey Manac	OLB	6-3	243	Fr.	Fargo
51	David Marshall	OLB	6-3	274	So.	Thomaston
6	Natrez Patrick	ILB	6-3	238	Jr.	Atlanta
32	Monty Rice	LB	6-1	235	Fr.	Madison, AL
39	Rashad Roundtree	ILB	6-1	204	Jr.	Evans
3	Roquan Smith	LB	6-1	225	Jr.	Montezuma
44	Juwan Taylor	LB	6-1	214	Jr.	Hollywood, FL
15	D'Andre Walker	LB	6-3	223	Jr.	Fairburn
Defensive Backs		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
18	Deandre Baker	CB	5-11	180	Jr.	Miami, FL
35	Aaron Davis	CB	6-1	189	Sr.	Locust Grove
8	Deangelo Gibbs	DB	6-1	200	Fr.	Oxford
29	Tim Hill	DB	5-11	172	Sr.	Atlanta
2	Richard LeCounte, III	DB	5-11	180	Fr.	Riceboro
26	Tyrique McGhee	DB	5-10	183	So.	Byron
37	Jordon McKinney	DB	6-0	187	Fr.	Dalton
33	Isaac Mize	DB	6-0	185	Jr.	Gainesville
14	Malkom Parrish	CB	5-10	185	Sr.	Quitman
23	J.R. Reed	DB	6-1	194	So.	Frisco, TX
16	Caleeb Roberson	DB	6-1	180	Fr.	Waynesboro
24	Dominick Sanders	SS	6-0	193	Sr.	Tucker
23	Jake Skole	DB	6-2	215	Fr.	Roswell
27	KJ Smith	DB	5-11	172	So.	Perry
19	Jarvis Wilson	DB	6-2	199	Jr.	Tupelo, MS
Specialist		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
98	Rodrigo Blankenship	PK	6-1	191	So.	Marietta
56	John Courson	SN	5-11	193	Jr.	Athens
97	Will Cowart	P	6-3	165	Jr.	Warner Robins
91	Michael D'Angola	P	6-2	196	Jr.	Suwanee
69	Trent Frix	SN	6-0	215	Sr.	Calhoun
59	Matthew Herzwurm	SN	6-0	236	Sr.	Augusta
95	Marshall Long	P	6-2	217	So.	China Grove, NC
92	Cameron Nizialek	P	6-2	200	Gs.	Chantilly, VA
49	Koby Pyrz	SN	6-2	282	Fr.	Cairo
96	Hudson Reynolds	SN	6-4	216	So.	Bainbridge
90	Tanner Stumpe	PK	5-8	178	Jr.	Albany
99	Mitchell Wasson	PK	5-11	179	Fr.	Roswell

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On last season:** "I think Georgia is as talented as anybody in the league other than Alabama. I think they underperformed last year. Kirby Smart was a typical first-year coach; he lost some games he should have won. They lost to Tennessee and should have won that game. They lost to Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt. That (stuff) has got to get corrected."

• **On the offense:** "They played with a freshman quarterback (Jacob Eason) and he played well at times. But the offensive line is a concern. The running backs (Nick Chubb and Sony Michel) will help Eason in some games, but against the right team when you can't run the ball, it puts it right back on the offensive line to protect the quarterback, and the quarterback's got to throw it."

• **On 2017 prediction:** "I wouldn't pick Georgia to win the East. I pick Florida. Why? It goes back to confidence."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Eason	13	120.3	204	370	8	55.1	2430	16	77	186.9
G. Lambert	3	97.5	7	12	0	58.3	56	0	25	18.7

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
I. McKenzie	13	44	633	14.4	7	77	48.7
T. Godwin	13	38	397	10.4	0	38	30.5
I. Nauta	13	29	361	12.4	3	50	27.8

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
N. Chubb	13	224	1180	50	1130	5.0	8	55	86.9
S. Michel	12	152	871	31	840	5.5	4	42	70.0
B. Herrien	12	63	372	9	363	5.8	3	23	30.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: R. Smith 95, N. Patrick 59, T. Thompson 56
Tackles for loss: T. Thompson 9.5, D. Bellamy 9, L. Carter 6
Sacks: D. Bellamy 5, L. Carter 5, T. Thompson 5
Interceptions: D. Sanders 3, six tied with 2

247SPORTS BULLDOGS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Richard LeCounte III, S

The uber-athletic 5-11, 180-pound prospect is a dynamic playmaker to have roaming the back end of the defense. LeCounte should compete for early playing time on the Bulldogs' defense this fall. The five-star recruit was one of best high school free safeties in the nation.

Isaiah Wilson, OT

Standing 6-7, 350 pounds there likely was not a more physically imposing prospect in the 2017 class than Wilson. Look for Wilson, who has immense potential, to compete for a starting job during his true freshman year.

D'Andre Swift, RB

Georgia continued its tradition of landing talented ball carriers by signing the 5-9, 220-pound Swift. The stout runner is strong enough to break tackles, but also shows the shiftiness to make defenders miss. Swift could be Georgia's workhorse back in his second year.

SLEEPER

Eric Stokes, CB

The physical tools possessed by Stokes — blazing speed and good length — have many high on this three-star recruit. While he might need more seasoning at the cornerback position early in his career, look for Stokes to make a huge impact on the defense before he is done in Athens.

2018 NEEDS

After seemingly having a glut of talented running backs on their roster, it appears Georgia is back in the market for more elite ball carriers. Look for the Bulldogs to try to sign two running backs in the 2018 class, with the focus being prospects that can make an early impact once on campus. Georgia could become thin at the position after early entries into the NFL draft once the season ends.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star
2	18	6	0

Committments	26
Average Stars	3.85
Total Stars	100
National Rank: 3	SEC: 2

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Robert Beal	LB	6-4	244	✪✪✪✪	Lawrenceville	Peachtree Ridge
247Sports.com rated No. 8 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 11 player in Georgia… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… As a senior, had 18 tackles, including one tackle for loss, one interception and scored one touchdown.						
Detravion Bishop	DB	6-3	200	✪✪✪✪	Dawson	Terrell County
Ranked No. 19 cornerback nationally and No. 14 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game.						
Trey Blount, III	WR	6-2	193	✪✪✪✪	Atlanta	Pace Academy
247Sports.com rated No. 47 wide receiver nationally and No. 33 player in Georgia… Had 23 receptions for 403 yards, averaging 19.2 yards per reception, as a senior.						
Latavious Brini	DB	6-2	196	✪✪✪	Miami Gardens, FL	Mater Academy
Ranked No. 42 cornerback nationally and No. 48 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 55 tackles, three interceptions, one fumble caused and three fumbles recovered.						
D'Antne Demery	OL	6-6	312	✪✪✪✪	Brunswick	Brunswick
247Sports.com rated No. 26 offensive tackle nationally and No. 17 player in Georgia… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* All-State.						
Jake Fromm	QB	6-2	230	✪✪✪✪	Warner Robins	Houston County
Ranked No. 3 pro-style quarterback and No. 47 player nationally and No. 5 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* Offensive Player of the Year… Had 12,745 career yards passing and 116 touchdowns… Completed 244 of 383 passes for 3,910 yards as a senior.						
DeAngelo Gibbs	DB	6-1	208	✪✪✪✪	Oxford	Grayson
247Sports.com rated No. 4 safety nationally and No. 6 player in Georgia… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Two-time *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* All-State… Helped team to state championship as a senior.						
Walter Grant	LB	6-4	232	✪✪✪✪	Cairo	Cairo
Ranked No. 13 outside linebacker nationally and No. 21 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 512 yards rushing and seven touchdowns… Had 3.5 quarterback sacks and one interception.						
D'Marcus Hayes	OL	6-5	330	✪✪✪✪	Perkinston, MS	Gulf Coast C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 2 junior college offensive lineman and No. 15 player nationally… Helped team average 194.1 yards per game as a sophomore.						
Malik Herring	DL	6-3	265	✪✪✪✪	Forsyth	Mary Persons
Ranked No. 4 defensive end nationally and No. 15 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 81 tackles, including 27 tackles for loss, nine quarterback sacks and two fumbles caused… Had three receptions and scored two touchdowns.						
Jeremiah Holloman	WR	6-2	187	✪✪✪✪	Covington	Newton
247Sports.com rated No. 16 wide receiver and No. 98 player nationally and No. 10 player in Georgia… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Had 101 career receptions for 1,596 yards and 17 touchdowns… Had 31 receptions for 513 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior.						
Jaden Hunter	LB	6-2	213	✪✪✪✪	Atlanta	Westlake
Ranked No. 15 outside linebacker nationally and No. 18 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* All-State… As a senior, helped team to state semifinals.						
Netori Johnson	OL	6-4	334	✪✪✪✪	Ellenwood	Cedar Grove
247Sports.com rated No. 6 offensive guard nationally and No. 12 player in Georgia… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* All-State.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Matthew Landers	WR	6-5	185	✪✪✪	Pinellas Park, FL	St. Petersburg
Ranked No. 97 wide receiver nationally and No. 89 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 40 receptions for 719 yards and seven touchdowns… Scored one rushing touchdown.						
Richard LeCounte, III	DB	5-11	180	✪✪✪✪✪	Riceboro	Liberty County
USA Today All-American… 247Sports.com rated No. 1 safety and No. 17 player nationally and No. 1 player in Georgia… Had 399 career tackles, including 36 tackles for loss, 13 interceptions, 13 fumbles caused, eight fumbles recovered, and scored three defensive touchdowns… Had 100 tackles, including 11 tackles for loss, two fumbles caused and two interceptions, returning one for a touchdown, as a senior.						
Nate McBride	LB	6-2	223	✪✪✪✪	Lyons	Vidalia
USA Today All-American… Ranked No. 10 inside linebacker nationally and No. 23 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… As a senior, had 115 tackles, including seven tackles for loss, three quarterback sacks and one interception.						
William Poole, III	DB	6-0	181	✪✪✪✪	Atlanta	Hapeville Charter
247Sports.com rated No. 25 defensive back nationally and No. 20 player in Georgia… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
Monty Rice	ILB	6-1	235	✪✪✪	Madison, AL	James Clemens
Ranked No. 33 inside linebacker nationally and No. 40 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 137 tackles (80 solo), one quarterback sack, four interceptions and scored four touchdowns.						
Justin Shaffer	OL	6-4	350	✪✪✪	Ellenwood	Cedar Grove
247Sports.com rated No. 22 offensive guard nationally and No. 43 player in Georgia… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* All-State… Helped team to state championship as a senior.						
Ameer Speed	DB	6-3	207	✪✪✪	Jacksonville, FL	Sandalwood
Ranked No. 41 defensive back nationally and No. 44 player in Florida by 247Sports.com.						
Eric Stokes	DB	6-1	173	✪✪✪	Covington	Eastside
247Sports.com rated No. 61 cornerback nationally and No. 66 player in Georgia… As a senior, had 20 tackles, including one tackle for loss, two interceptions and five passes broken up.						
D'Andre Swift	RB	5-9	220	✪✪✪✪	Philadelphia, PA	St. Joseph's Prep
USA Today All-American… Ranked No. 4 running back and No. 33 player nationally and No. 1 player in Pennsylvania by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Helped team to 14-0 record and state championship as a senior… Had 1,564 yards rushing and 25 touchdowns on 149 carries.						
Andrew Thomas	OL	6-5	338	✪✪✪✪	Lithonia	Pace Academy
247Sports.com rated No. 9 offensive tackle and No. 42 player nationally and No. 4 player in Georgia… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* All-State.						
Mark Webb, Jr.	WR	6-1	200	✪✪✪✪	Philadelphia, PA	Archbishop Wood
Ranked No. 22 wide receiver nationally and No. 6 player in Pennsylvania by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state championship as a senior… Had 703 yards receiving and six touchdowns.						
Isaiah Wilson	OL	6-7	350	✪✪✪✪✪	Brooklyn, NY	Poly Prep Country Day
247Sports.com rated No. 5 offensive tackle and No. 16 player nationally and No. 1 player in New York… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
Devonte Wyatt	DL	6-3	301	✪✪✪✪	Decatur	Towers
Ranked No. 14 defensive tackle nationally and No. 28 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Atlanta Journal-Constitution All-State.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Unfinished Business Left For Nick Chubb

It seemed to be a foregone conclusion that Nick Chubb and Sony Michel would leave for the NFL after last season. After all, what was there left to prove for the two Georgia running backs who have amassed 5,810 yards and 46 touchdowns despite injuries and playing behind Todd Gurley their freshman seasons?

Plenty, it turns out.

Although he returned from a major knee injury that cut short his sophomore season and rushed for 1,130 yards, Chubb knew he wasn't quite the explosive back he was before the injury. That was reflected in his yards per carry — 7.3 before the injury, 5.0 after.

"It just wasn't time," Chubb said. "I felt like this is where I need to be this upcoming year. I wanted to work hard in the offseason, win some games and see where that takes us later on."

That could take Chubb to a Heisman run if he stays healthy and regains the quickness he displayed before the injury, when he rushed for 2,294 yards despite sharing the load with Gurley and Michel for much of the time. But you will never hear Chubb place himself in the race for the Heisman or any other individual award.

"I haven't set any goals yet," he said. "I just try to make the team better."

Chubb has made the Dean's List several times and is on pace to graduate next spring with a degree in agriculture. But stardom is something he could do without, especially when he ventures out into Athens to go eat.

"You get adjusted to it. You get comfortable," Chubb said. "(But) sometimes I do just want to go get my food and leave."

Offensive coordinator Jim Chaney is trying to incorporate Chubb more into the passing game. He caught 18 passes for 213 yards as a freshman. Chubb did say he feels more like his old self now that he's had an offseason to work on his game rather than just rehabbing the knee.

"Yeah, maybe a little more quickness."

Another threat to his Heisman chances could be Georgia's depth at running back. In addition to Michel, the Dawgs have Brian Herrien and Elijah Holyfield returning, plus five-star recruit D'Andre Swift joining the rotation in August. But Chubb insisted that sharing the load doesn't bother him.

"Not at all," he said. "As long as we're winning games."

RB **Nick Chubb**

Photo by AP Photo/David Stephenson

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/georgia

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

RB NICK CHUBB

Set Chick-Fil-A Kickoff Classic record with 222 yards rushing against North Carolina last season in his first game back from major knee injury. ... Played most of 2016 with sprained ankle but still ran for 1,130 yards, seventh in the SEC. ... His 3,424 career rushing yards rank second in UGA history behind Herschel Walker. ... Career mark of 6.4 yards per carry is the second-best in school history behind Todd Gurley for players with 150 or more rushes.

EMERGING STAR

TE ISAAC NAUTA

Third-leading receiver last season with 29 catches and 361 yards. ... Had a huge 50-yard catch against Tennessee. ... Made several national Freshman All-America teams; was also on the SEC All-Freshman team. ... Nauta often was Jacob Eason's favorite receiver in clutch situations. Had a 17-yard catch on third-and-six in win over Auburn. ... Improved his blocking skills as he gained experience.

TOP NEWCOMER

S RICHARD LECOUNTE III

Several freshman offensive linemen are in contention for this honor because of opportunity, but the competition is too close to call. ... Very physical safety has a chance to be a star quickly. Plays full speed despite inexperience, so he's going to make some big plays and some mistakes. ... Could make an immediate impact on special teams, both as a returner and on coverage. ... Led Liberty County to a state championship in basketball.

LINDY'S FOOTBALL Report

PRESENTED BY

GORDO'S®

Listen
Every Week
All Season Long

Visit: www.lindyssports.com
for stations and broadcast times

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

For more coverage of the Wildcats, visit kentucky.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Eddie Gran, Darin Hinshaw **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Matt House **STADIUM:** Commonwealth Stadium: 67,942

KENTUCKY LOOKING TO BUILD OFF MOMENTUM OF 2016

Sweat poured off Kentucky's coach in a makeshift interview room at Florida as he tried to answer questions about the Gators' 45-7 leveling of the Cats.

"We got our butts kicked," Mark Stoops said. "On offense and defense."

Where does Kentucky go from here, he was asked.

"Back to work," Stoops said, simply. "There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. We're in the arena. Time to go to work. That's where we go."

A game later, when UK's starting quarterback went down with what turned out to be a season-ending back injury, things looked even more desperate.

But UK went back to work and won seven of its final 10 regular-season games, including an upset of Louisville and Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson to go to its first bowl in six seasons.

The Cats' season ended with a loss to Georgia Tech in that TaxSlayer Bowl, but it helped set the tone for getting back to work to become a true contender in the Southeastern Conference.

"This makes us hungrier as a group, as a team," said quarterback Stephen Johnson, who helped revive UK's season. "We can only go up from here. We have so many great standards and high expectations for us now; all we can do is go up from here."

With 18 starters returning, including 85 percent of UK's defensive production, the goal is to go from a consistent basement dweller in the league to a contender, at least in the SEC East Division.

Stoops thinks he has the players to do that this season, including Johnson and Freshman All-American running back Benny Snell Jr. on one side of the ball and eight of the team's top 10 tacklers back from last season on the other.

Some key questions loom about Kentucky's defensive line, punting and if it can replace some key playmakers in running back Boom Williams and wide receiver Jeff Badet, but the staff seems comfortable with the trajectory.

"We still have a ways to go in certain areas, but I like this team," Stoops said after the Blue-White Spring Game. "There's certainly fewer question marks coming out of spring than in years past."

OFFENSE

The offense that took the field most of last season was not the offense its coordinators imagined when they arrived at Kentucky a few months earlier.

The injury to starting quarterback Drew Barker and the immersion of true freshman running back Benny Snell Jr. forced UK's Eddie Gran and Darin Hinshaw to call an audible and turn Kentucky into a run-first offense.

But the coordinators assure that they'd like to go back to a balanced attack this season, like the one fans saw in the upset of Louisville at the end of the season. In that game, the Cats ran for 229 yards and two touchdowns while passing for 352 with three scores behind junior college transfer Stephen Johnson.

"That's the offense we want to be," Hinshaw said. "If you can do that, you're going to be a very, very potent offense that's going to be able to score a lot of points."

Kentucky has the potential to be that type of offense this season with eight starters back and all but one of its top nine offensive linemen from last season.

It starts with Snell. He set more than a handful of freshman rushing records with his aggressive style that amassed 1,091 yards and 13 touchdowns, despite not having a carry in his first two games.

Perhaps cornerback Chris Westry described Snell's style best: "That man runs like somebody hit his mom every time."

Snell had the benefit of running with another 1,000-yard rusher in Boom Williams, but he left early for the NFL. More than 1,000 yards needs to be made up via several players, including speedy junior Sihiem King, redshirt freshman A.J. Rose and one of two freshmen in Lynn Bowden and Bryant Koback.

Snell wasn't the only surprise of last season. Enter Johnson, who took over the offense a few plays into the third game and led the Cats from an 0-2 start to a 7-4 finish, including four SEC victories.

The main knock on Johnson, who is a running threat and throws a pretty deep ball, was turnovers. Slight in stature, he fumbled

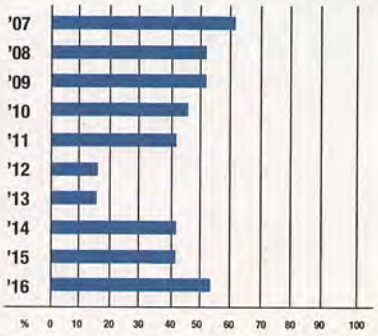
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	at Southern Miss	7-6
Sept. 9	EASTERN KENTUCKY	3-8
Sept. 16	at South Carolina	6-7
Sept. 23	FLORIDA	9-4
Sept. 30	EASTERN MICHIGAN	7-6
Oct. 7	MISSOURI	4-8
Oct. 21	at Mississippi State	6-7
Oct. 28	TENNESSEE	9-4
Nov. 4	OLE MISS	5-7
Nov. 11	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Nov. 18	at Georgia	8-5
Nov. 25	LOUISVILLE	9-4

RESULTS

7-6, 4-4		
L	SOUTHERN MISS	35-44
L	at Florida	7-45
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	62-42
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	17-10
L	at Alabama	6-34
W	VANDERBILT	20-13
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	40-38
W	at Missouri	35-21
L	GEORGIA	24-27
L	at Tennessee	36-49
W	AUSTIN PEAY	49-13
W	at Louisville	41-38
	TaxSlayer Bowl	
L	vs. Georgia Tech	18-33

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Lexington, Ky.

2016:
7-6 overall, 4-4 SEC (T-2nd, East)

COACH:
Mark Stoops — At Kentucky and overall: 19-30, 4 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
18; 8 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Stephen Johnson, RB Benny Snell Jr., WR Garrett Johnson, TE C.J. Conrad, DE Denzil Ware, LB Jordan Jones, CB Derrick Baity, S Mike Edwards

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Kentucky has a large chunk of playmakers back on both sides of the ball and will look to build off its running success last season behind Snell and an experienced, deep offensive line. The Cats return their top four and eight of their top 10 tacklers from last season and are working to add even more depth and speed.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
With much progress made in the offseason, Stoops still seemed most concerned about UK's interior defensive line and its lack of aggression and/or production. On offense, QB Stephen Johnson showed the ability to throw the long ball, but he's looking for more consistent targets at wideout. Punting continues to
be a big question mark as well.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Boom Williams, WR Jeff Badet, C Jon Toth, DT Courtney Miggins, DB Marcus McWilson, DB Blake McClain

OVERVIEW:
Kentucky surprised many last season with its four SEC wins and first bowl trip since 2010, but a loss to Georgia Tech in the TaxSlayer Bowl was a good reminder for the Cats that they haven't arrived. Stoops is trying to build on that success from last season and perhaps take it to the next level by challenging for the SEC East title.

KEY NUMBER:
6 The number of freshman records set by running back Benny Snell Jr. in his first season at Kentucky, including 1,091 yards on 186 carries and 13 rushing touchdowns. An even bigger sophomore season would be good news for UK.

LB Jordan JONES

Photo by Joe Robbins

QB

Stephen Johnson

Photo by Joe Robbins

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Stephen Johnson***	Sr.	Trying to add strength to cut down on turnovers this year.	Gunnar Hoak, Fr.
RB	Benny Snell Jr.	So.	Broke six freshmen rushing records; has gotten even better.	Sihiem King, Jr.
WR	**Dorian Baker***	Sr.	Top receiver in 2015, but spent much of last season hurt.	Tavin Richardson, So.
WR	**Garrett Johnson***	Sr.	Can play multiple positions; needs to become vocal leader.	Charles Walker, Sr.
WR	Blake Bone	Sr.	Offseason meeting with Stoops changed attitude, work ethic.	Kayaune Ross, Jr.
TE	**C.J. Conrad***	Jr.	Sat out spring with shoulder injury; will be go-to playmaker, leader.	Greg Hart, Sr.
LT	**Cole Mosier***	Sr.	Steady, consistent player with fast feet, high football IQ.	Landon Young, So.
LG	Logan Stenberg	So.	Could've started much of last season; claimed LG spot in spring.	Luke Fortner, Fr.
C	**Bunchy Stallings***	Jr.	Athletic, smart former right guard takes over at center spot.	Drake Jackson, Fr.
RG	**Nick Haynes***	Sr.	Versatile veteran with 22 starts will move to right guard.	George Asafo-Adjei, Jr.
RT	**Kyle Meadows***	Sr.	Has started 22 straight games, helps anchor impressive line.	George Asafo-Adjei, Jr.
PK	**Austin MacGinnis***	Sr.	Made 84.2 percent of FGs last season, including two game-winners.	Miles Butler, Jr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DT	**Adrian Middleton***	Jr.	Dropped 20-plus pounds and made huge strides in spring.	Kordell Looney, Fr.
NT	Naquez Pringle	Sr.	Worked his way into starting job midway through last season.	Matt Elam, Sr.
DE	Alvonte Bell	Sr.	Missed spring with knee injury; needs to become difference-maker.	T.J. Carter, So.
LB	**Josh Allen***	Jr.	Led UK in sacks (seven) and has added speed, size.	Jordan Bonner, Jr.
LB	**Courtney Love***	Sr.	Made key plays late in season, strong vocal leader.	Kash Daniel, So.
LB	**Jordan Jones***	Jr.	Described as "athletic freak" with high motor, seeking consistency.	Eli Brown, So.
LB	**Denzil Ware***	Jr.	Started 19 straight, second on team in TFLs, sacks last year.	Jamar Watson, Fr.
CB	**Chris Westry***	Jr.	Has started every game since arriving at UK.	Jordan Griffin, So.
CB	**Derrick Baity***	Jr.	Had breakout season last year with three picks, 42 tackles.	Cedrick Dort Jr., Fr.
S	Darius West	Jr.	Returns from leg injury last August; physical leader in secondary.	Davonte Robinson, Fr.
S	**Mike Edwards***	Jr.	Star in secondary with 100 tackles, three picks last year.	Kendall Randolph, Sr.
P	**Grant McKinniss***	So.	His average was at bottom of the league in his first season.	Matthew Panton, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

10 times, losing six, and threw six interceptions. He's working hard this offseason to add strength and bulk, hoping to cut down on the miscues.

Johnson's favorite deep target, Jeff Badet (670 yards, four scores), opted to transfer after graduation, which means UK is waiting for a handful of wideouts to emerge. The Cats are looking to seniors like Garrett Johnson, Dorian Baker and Blake Bone to take a big step forward in leadership and production.

DEFENSE

Nearly every face in the front seven was brand new at the start of last season — and it showed as Kentucky gave up a mind-blowing 500 yards or more in each of its first three games.

But some playmakers slowly emerged, and now 85 percent of that defensive production from last season returns with added depth.

The Cats return eight of their top 10 tacklers from last season, including their top four in weakside linebacker Jordan Jones (109 tackles, 15.5 tackles for loss), safety Mike Edwards (100, 5.5), middle linebacker Courtney Love (76 tackles) and outside linebacker Denzil Ware (70, 12).

Those key players must continue to grow if UK hopes to be better than 11th best in the Southeastern Conference in scoring defense, allowing 31.3 points a game. Kentucky especially struggled containing the run, allowing 228.2 yards a game on the ground, near the bottom of the league.

Kentucky's biggest concern going into the offseason was lack of production from its interior defensive line play, as that group managed less than 20 percent of the team's tackles for loss and just one percent of its sacks.

"We need to play better," Stoops said at the start of spring. "It was not a strength of ours last year at all. It was an area that we need to address, and we are addressing, and we expect to play better."

By the end of the spring, coaches seemed pleased with the growth of that group, led by defensive tackles Adrian Middleton and Alvonte Bell, as well as nose guard Naquez Pringle.

Under new coordinator Matt House, who coached middle linebackers and special teams last season, Kentucky would like to evolve into a more-aggressive defense that creates more turnovers.

Kentucky has some of the necessary pieces for that, including outside linebackers Josh Allen and Ware, whose combined numbers last season were better than those of the NFL-bound duo Bud Dupree and Za'Darius Smith in 2014. The outside linebackers also got a new coach in the offseason in Dean Hood, a former head coach at Eastern Kentucky University.

The Cats' biggest strength could be the secondary, with Edwards as well as cornerbacks Chris Westry and Derrick Baity, all multi-year starters. Former starter Darius West, who sat out last season

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Mike Edwards SS 5-11 200 4.59 rJr.

Edwards led all SEC defensive backs with 93 tackles over the 2016 regular season, earning third-team all-conference honors after initially impressing in 2015 by playing in all 12 games and earning starts in the final five games of the year.

He tied for the team lead last season with three interceptions, including two of Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson in the Cats' 41-38 victory over then-No. 11 Louisville.

Edwards does not possess the size and straight-line speed to wow scouts, but he is an aggressive, coordinated athlete who doesn't back down to physicality. He is quick to attack the line of scrimmage in run support and possesses enough agility and speed to handle coverage duties.

The Ohio native was given a four-star grade from some recruiting services and starred in several sports in high school, playing baseball, basketball and track. Edwards signed with the Wildcats over offers from the likes of relative football powerhouses Wisconsin, Nebraska, Missouri and West Virginia, among others.

2. Jordan Jones	ILB	6-1	220	4.67	Jr.
3. C.J. Conrad	TE	6-5	245	4.82	Jr.
4. Matt Elam	DT	6-6	360	5.57	Sr.
5. Kyle Meadows	OT	6-5	298	5.20	rSr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

with a knee injury, is back this season as well.

But UK lost some versatility in players like Marcus McWilson and Blake McClain. There will be some growing pains as UK looks to develop some defensive back depth, especially at the safety and nickel spots.

"I feel very good about where we're at," Stoops said. "The players really have a good attitude right now and have really worked hard, so we've got to just continue to do the same thing, put our head down and go to work."

SPECIAL TEAMS

With game-winning kicks over Louisville and Mississippi State last season, senior Austin MacGinnis goes into the season with sky-high confidence, having made 16 of 19 field-goal attempts last season. He is primed to become the program's all-time scoring leader this season.

As comfortable as Kentucky is with its place-kicking, it's uncomfortable with its punting situation.

True freshman Grant McKinniss struggled with confidence and distance last year, averaging just 39.2 yards per punt, worst in the SEC. McKinniss could get some competition from Matthew Panton, a former Columbia University punter from Australia, who tweeted that he was joining the team and attending business school at UK.

UK returns senior punt returner Charles Walker (15 returns for 117 yards and the team's first touchdown for that unit since 2010) but hasn't settled on a permanent kick returner yet.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Kentucky will get a quick check of how much improvement it has made from a season ago when it opens the season at Southern Miss, which upset UK at Commonwealth Stadium a year ago.

The Cats then head home to face an Eastern Kentucky team that took them to overtime two years ago, followed by a trip to South Carolina. UK has won three in a row vs. the Gamecocks.

The game every UK fan has circled is against Florida at home on Sept. 23. The Wildcats will try to end their 30-game losing streak in the series.

The Cats' back-and-forth series against Mississippi State resumes after their bye week, and UK trades out a trip to Alabama by hosting Ole Miss this season.

Kentucky plays two of its last three on the road at Vanderbilt and Georgia before heading home for a rematch with Louisville and Heisman winner Lamar Jackson, which UK upset last year.

— Jennifer Smith

RB **Benny Snell, Jr.**

Photo by Joe Robbins

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.2	60
Rushing	153.2	T-77
Passing	231.2	63
Total	384.3	79
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.3	93
Rushing	191.2	89
Passing	215.8	43
Total	406.9	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.7	19

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.7	95
Rushing	162.7	78
Passing	209.3	79
Total	372.0	89
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.4	69
Rushing	196.1	96
Passing	198.1	28
Total	394.2	59
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- 0.17	T-85

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.0	58
Rushing	234.2	20
Passing	186.1	102
Total	420.2	61
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.3	T-86
Rushing	228.2	110
Passing	206.1	35
Total	434.2	85
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.54	T-107

NOTEBOOK

Kentucky has been comfortably vanilla on special teams since **Mike Stoops** arrived on campus with fewer than three fake attempts from that unit in the past four seasons.

But the hiring of **Dean Hood** may change all of that. When he was the head coach at Eastern Kentucky, Hood also ran special teams and found that being aggressive kept opponents guessing. Fakes, especially on punts, became a staple in spring practice. Players regularly were drilled on punt blocking.

It's all an attempt to make the risk-taking not seem so risky.

"This isn't going to be some game-week thing, something you draw up and say, 'I hope it works,'" Hood said. "It's something we're doing as part of our install.

"So I think (Stoops) is more open to it because he sees it's not gimmicky. It's structured. It's part of practice and we've bought into it early."

• **John Schlarman** could become a blackjack dealer in Las Vegas with all of his shuffling in the past year.

Not only did UK's offensive line coach shuffle first- and second-teamers in and out with ease last season, playing them nearly equal numbers of snaps in some games, he also has been playing around with different players and different spots on the line.

That trend from last season will continue into this season, with eight to nine players that he thinks can swap in at multiple positions on the line to get the best five out there, such as junior **George Asafo-Adjei**, who likely will see time at the right guard and right tackle spots.

"Right now we're moving around a little bit more than we would in the fall," Schlarman said in April. "In the long run that will make us better up front as a whole."

• After leading UK to its first bowl game since 2010 (after an 0-2 start), Stoops signed a contract extension that will keep him at Kentucky through 2022 with salary bumps each year and additional incentives.

"I'm very committed to this university," he said. "They've been committed to me, but none of us are content. We want to keep on pushing."

WILDCATS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
7 Drew Barker	QB	6-3	225	Jr.	Burlington
13 Danny Clark	QB	6-2	230	Fr.	Columbus, OH
12 Gunnar Hoak	QB	6-4	200	Fr.	Dublin, OH
15 Stephen Johnson	QB	6-2	183	Sr.	Rancho Cucamonga, CA
17 Walker Wood	QB	6-0	190	Fr.	Lexington
14 Luke Wright	QB	6-4	206	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
24 Zach Johnson	RB	5-10	193	Fr.	Cincinnati, OH
22 Sihiem King	RB	5-9	172	Jr.	Moultrie, GA
24 Bryant Koback	RB	6-0	200	Fr.	Holland, OH
32 William Mahone III	RB	5-9	200	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
10 Asim "A.J." Rose	RB	6-1	200	Fr.	Cleveland, OH
26 Benjamin Snell, Jr.	RB	5-11	220	So.	Westerville, OH
25 Harold Turks	RB	6-4	175	Fr.	Nashville, TN
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
2 Dorian Baker	WR	6-3	211	Sr.	Cleveland Heights, OH
23 Brayden Berezowitz	WR	5-9	158	Fr.	Lexington
27 Bryan Berezowitz	WR	5-9	175	Fr.	Lexington
6 Blake Bone	WR	6-5	213	Sr.	Woodruff, SC
31 David Bouvier	WR	5-9	171	Jr.	Lexington
82 Jabari Greenwood	WR	6-3	195	So.	Washington, DC
81 Dakota Holtzclaw	WR	6-7	216	Fr.	Columbus, OH
9 Garrett Johnson	WR	5-11	175	Sr.	Winter Garden, FL
20 Ryan Kendall	WR	5-10	193	Jr.	Charlotte, NC
84 Charles Moushey	WR	6-0	180	Sr.	Westerville, OH
11 Tavin Richardson	WR	6-3	216	So.	Duncan, SC
30 Marvin Robinson	WR	6-4	175	So.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
19 Kayaune Ross	WR	6-6	225	Jr.	West Chester, OH
18 Clevan Thomas	WR	5-11	190	Fr.	Miami, FL
88 Charles Walker	WR	5-11	203	Sr.	Louisville
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
87 C.J. Conrad	TE	6-5	245	Jr.	LaGrange, OH
85 Greg Hart	TE	6-5	245	Sr.	Dayton, OH
83 Justin Rigg	TE	6-6	251	So.	Springboro, OH
36 Jake Sauder	TE	6-3	240	Fr.	Pittsburgh, PA
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
64 George Asafo-Adjei	G	6-5	315	Jr.	West Chester, OH
55 David Baumer	G	6-5	309	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
79 Luke Fortner	T	6-6	305	Fr.	Sylvania, OH
62 Dylan Greenberg	G	6-2	302	Sr.	Tucson, AZ
68 Nick Haynes	G	6-3	316	Sr.	Niceville, FL
52 Drake Jackson	C	6-2	302	Fr.	Versailles
75 Tate Leavitt	T	6-6	310	Jr.	Thornville, OH
73 Kyle Meadows	T	6-5	300	Sr.	West Chester, OH
69 Ramsey Meyers	G	6-4	305	Sr.	Orange Park, FL
74 Cole Mosier	T	6-6	335	Sr.	Walton
65 Jervontius Stallings	C	6-3	318	Jr.	Hoover, AL
71 Logan Stenberg	G	6-6	318	So.	Madison, AL
77 Mason Wolfe	T	6-6	305	So.	Henderson
67 Landon Young	OL	6-7	305	So.	Lexington

Defensive Linemen	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
92 Alvonte Bell	DE	6-5	260	Sr.	Miramar, FL
90 T.J. Carter	DE	6-4	275	So.	Mableton, GA
93 Ja'Quize Cross	DL	6-3	312	Fr.	New Market, AL
20 Kengera Daniel	DE	6-5	260	Jr.	Raleigh, NC
98 Tymere Dubose	DT	6-5	320	Jr.	Youngstown, OH
69 Matt Elam	DT	6-7	360	Sr.	Elizabethtown
36 Jacob Hyde	NT	6-2	320	Sr.	Manchester
97 Kevin Kirby	DL	6-6	270	Fr.	Louisville
59 Kordell Looney	DT	6-3	285	Fr.	Springfield, OH
99 Adrian Middleton	DT	6-3	303	Jr.	Bowling Green
77 Naquez Pringle	DT	6-3	320	Sr.	Georgetown, SC
60 Calvin Taylor, Jr.	DT	6-9	295	So.	Augusta, GA
35 Denzil Ware	DE	6-2	255	Jr.	Opp, AL
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
41 Josh Allen	LB	6-5	230	Jr.	Montclair, NJ
45 Jaylin Bannerman	LB	6-5	220	Fr.	Pickerington, OH
39 Elijah Barnett	LB	6-3	230	So.	Lexington
43 Logan Blue	LB	6-4	240	Jr.	Owensboro
47 Jordan Bonner	LB	6-5	220	Jr.	Lyndhurst, OH
32 Eli Brown	LB	6-2	215	So.	Bowing Green
56 Kash Daniel	LB	6-1	241	So.	Paintsville
44 Jamin Davis	LB	6-4	210	Fr.	Ludowici, GA
37 Spencer Foy	LB	6-4	226	Jr.	Louisville
34 Jordan Jones	LB	6-2	220	Jr.	Youngstown, OH
51 Courtney Love	LB	6-2	242	Sr.	Youngstown, OH
46 Drew Schlegel	LB	5-11	202	Fr.	Parker, CO
33 Roland Walder	LB	6-3	215	Fr.	Dayton, OH
31 Jamar "Boogie" Watson	LB	6-3	234	Fr.	Forestville, MD
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
29 Derrick Baity	CB	6-3	182	Jr.	Tampa, FL
28 Kei Beckham	CB	5-11	175	So.	Trotwood, OH
27 Cedrick Dort, Jr.	CB	5-11	170	Fr.	West Palm Beach, FL
7 Mike Edwards	S	6-0	200	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
17 Tobias Gilliam	DB	5-11	193	Fr.	Dayton, OH
3 Jordan Griffin	DB	6-0	177	So.	Jonesboro, GA
26 Jack Jackson	DB	5-11	165	Fr.	Lexington
6 Lonnie Johnson	CB	6-3	215	Jr.	Gary, IN
5 Kendall Randolph	CB	6-0	182	Sr.	Tallahassee, FL
9 Davonte Robinson	CB	6-2	187	Fr.	Lexington
48 Brett Slusher	DB	6-2	196	So.	Fort Mitchell
16 Marcus Walker	S	6-1	202	So.	Lake Wales, FL
25 Darius West	S	6-0	210	Jr.	Lima, OH
21 Chris Westry	CB	6-4	195	Jr.	Orange Park, FL
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
53 Blake Best	LS	6-1	246	So.	Duluth, GA
95 Miles Butler	K	5-9	171	Jr.	Paducah
89 Zy'Aire Hughes	ATH	6-1	190	Fr.	Paducah
99 Austin MacGinnis	K	5-10	180	Sr.	Wedowee, AL
86 Grant McKinniss	P	6-1	210	So.	Findlay, OH
91 Tyler Pack	K	6-4	220	Fr.	Paintsville
54 Colton Piatt	LS	6-3	211	Fr.	Nashville, TN
42 Tristan Yeomans	LS	6-2	190	Jr.	Waycross, GA

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On coach Mark Stoops:** "Mark Stoops has done a great job. They're a scary football team because they have what I call 'Stoops fight' in them. Stoops is highly competitive and never gives up. I see that on tape when I watch his team. Therefore, they're dangerous. They may not be elite, but they can beat anybody on a given day because of that fight they have."

• **On the team:** "Their (run-oriented) offense was shock treatment in the middle of the year for opposing coaches. They got dramatically better with (OC) Eddie Gran calling plays. They have a style of play that moves the ball and scores points. But they are still deficient on defense. NFL teams aren't going to line up to look at No. 1 and 2 draft picks (on UK's defense), but they are sound and will fight you."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
S. Johnson	12	130.9	145	265	6	54.7	2037	13	75	169.8
D. Barker	3	136.8	18	36	5	50.0	334	4	72	111.3

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
G. Johnson	13	39	585	15.0	5	75	45.0
J. Badet	13	31	670	21.6	4	72	51.5
R. Timmons	13	23	266	11.6	0	32	20.5

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
S. Williams	13	171	1195	25	1170	6.8	7	63	90.0
B. Snell	13	186	1113	22	1091	5.9	13	48	83.9
J. Kemp	10	70	372	23	349	5.0	6	71	34.9

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Jones 109, M. Edwards 100, C. Love 76
Tackles for loss: J. Jones 15.5, D. Ware 12, J. Allen 8.5
Sacks: J. Allen 7, D. Ware 5.5, J. Jones 4
Interceptions: M. Edwards 3, B. McClain 3, D. Balty 3

247SPORTS WILDCATS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Lonnie Johnson, S

The junior college recruit enrolled early and went through spring drills. The 6-3, 203-pound prospect brings great length and size to the secondary. Johnson's ability to cover ground and fill the alley make him a likely starter this fall.

Phil Hoskins, DT

Another junior college prospect signed to play right away was this 6-5, 280-pound defensive tackle. Kentucky is counting on Hoskins to be in rotation up front this fall. It's clear Hoskins has the size to compete in the SEC trenches weekly.

Lynn Bowden, ATH

While it's unclear what position Bowden lines up at, it is clear he is dynamic with the ball in his hands. The 6-1, 190-pound playmaker could be a 'Wildcat quarterback' or he could get snaps as a slot receiver. Regardless, the four-star recruit was a big get for UK.

SLEEPER

Clevan Thomas Jr., WR

The Sunshine State product enrolled early and quickly caught the attention of coaches with his play during spring practice. The three-star recruit looks physically ready to handle the rigors of the SEC at a stout 5-11, 190 pounds. Thomas is also bringing a blue-collar work ethic to the field.

2018 NEEDS

SEC games are won in the trenches and Kentucky is making the offensive line, in particular offensive tackle, a priority position during the 2018 recruiting cycle. Kentucky would also like to address depth issues at tight end and running back in this upcoming class as well.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	6	18	0
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	24
Average Stars	3.25
Total Stars	78
National Rank: 29	SEC: 11

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Abule Abadi-Fitzgerald	DL	6-6	260	✪✪✪	Lakeland, FL	Victory Christian Academy
247Sports.com rated No. 53 strongside defensive end nationally… As a senior, had 24 tackles, two quarterback sacks and 13 quarterback hurries.						
Tyrell Ajian	DB	6-0	190	✪✪✪✪	Mansfield, OH	Madison Comprehensive
Ranked No. 17 player in Ohio by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Had 54 tackles and three interceptions as a junior… Had 783 yards receiving, 551 yards rushing and scored 19 touchdowns.						
Josh Ali	WR	6-0	180	✪✪✪	Hollywood, FL	Chaminade-Madonna
As a senior, had 43 receptions for 805 yards and four touchdowns… Returned one kickoff for touchdown… Helped team to state championship game… Had 56 receptions for 896 yards and 15 touchdowns as a junior.						
Quinton Bohanna	DL	6-4	320	✪✪✪	Cordova, TN	Cordova
Three-time All-State… Had 91 tackles (52 solo), including 24 tackles for loss, and 19 quarterback sacks as a senior… Helped to to 12-2 record and state semifinals.						
Lynn Bowden	ATH	6-1	190	✪✪✪✪	Youngstown, OH	Warren Harding
247Sports.com rated No. 5 athlete nationally… Had 7,387 career rushing yards and 91 touchdowns… As a senior, had 1,366 yards passing, 2,277 yards rushing and 57 total touchdowns.						
Danny Clark	QB	6-2	230	✪✪✪	Columbus, OH	Archbishop Hoban
247Sports.com rated No. 17 pro-style quarterback nationally and No. 18 player in Ohio… Led team to two consecutive state championships… Completed 117 of 213 passes for 2,122 yards and 15 touchdowns as a senior.						
Yusuf Corker	DB	6-0	190	✪✪✪✪	McDonough, GA	Woodland
As a senior, had 26 tackles (23 solo), three interceptions, two fumbles recovered and blocked two punts… Had 20 receptions for 447 yards and four touchdowns, averaging 23 yards per reception.						
Jamin Davis	LB	6-4	210	✪✪✪	Ludowici, GA	Long County
247Sports.com rated No. 59 outside linebacker nationally… Had 302 career tackles… Had 126 tackles (89 solo), including four tackles for loss, one quarterback sack, two fumbles caused and one fumble recovered as a senior… Blocked one punt and one field goal… Had 50 yards rushing and 12 receptions for 151 yards and three touchdowns.						
Sebastien Dolcine	OT	6-4	300	✪✪✪	Hollywood, FL	Miramar
Ranked No. 78 offensive guard nationally by 247Sports.com.						
Cedrick Dort, Jr.	DB	5-11	170	✪✪✪	Palm Beach Gardens, FL	Dwyer
As a senior, had 40 tackles, 14 passes broken up, and six interceptions, returning one for touchdown… Did not allow a touchdown pass, a first-down pass or a pass over five yards during the regular season.						
Austin Dotson	OT	6-6	310	✪✪✪	Belfry	Belfry
247Sports.com rated No. 9 player in Kentucky… All-State… As a senior, helped team to average 347.1 yards rushing and 44.1 points per game… Helped team to state championship.						
Isaiah Epps	WR	6-2	185	✪✪✪	Jenks, OK	Jenks
Had 59 receptions for 1,209 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior… Had 76 yards rushing and one touchdown.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Phil Hoskins	DL	6-5	280	✪✪✪	Toledo, OH	Highland Community College
Has three years of eligibility remaining… As a freshman, had 25 tackles, including eight tackles for loss, and four quarterback sacks.						
Lonnie Johnson, Jr.	DB	6-3	203	✪✪✪✪	Gary, IN	Garden City Community College
Has two years eligibility remaining… 247Sports.com rated No. 2 junior college safety and No. 43 junior college player nationally… As a freshman, had 35 tackles (28 solo), five interceptions, and one fumble recovered… Had 66 tackles and two interceptions as a prep senior… Had 40 receptions for 772 yards and 14 touchdowns.						
Alex King	OL	6-3	225	✪✪✪	Mason, OH	William Mason
Ranked No. 26 player in Ohio by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Had 40 tackles, six quarterback sacks, one fumble caused and one fumble recovered as a senior.						
Bryant Koback	RB	6-0	200	✪✪✪	Holland, OH	Springfield
Ranked No. 37 running back nationally by 247Sports.com… Had more than 4,400 career all-purpose yards and 57 touchdowns… As a senior, had 1,096 yards rushing and 19 touchdowns on 93 carries in four games before suffering an injury… Had seven receptions for 154 yards and two touchdowns… All-State as a junior.						
Michael Nesbitt	DB	6-0	185	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Boyd Anderson
As a senior, had 80 tackles, two interceptions, including one returned 71 yards for a touchdown, two fumbles caused, and 18 passes broken up.						
Josh Paschal	OL	6-3	270	✪✪✪✪	Olney, MD	Our Lady of Good Counsel
247Sports.com rated No. 11 strongside defensive end nationally… Had 64 tackles, including nine tackles for loss, 5.5 quarterback sacks, and four quarterback hurries as a senior.						
Javonte Richardson	WR	6-4	230	✪✪✪✪	Maple Heights, OH	Maple Heights
Ranked No. 32 wide receiver nationally and No. 10 player in Ohio by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American game… As a senior, had 1,190 all-purpose yards and eight touchdowns… Had 38 receptions for 504 yards and seven touchdowns as a junior, despite back injury… Had eight interceptions.						
Clevan Thomas, Jr.	WR	5-11	190	✪✪✪	Miami, FL	Charles W. Flanagan
Played defensive back, wide receiver and tight end as a senior… As a junior, had nine receiving touchdowns… Helped team to state championship.						
Naasir Watkins	OL	6-5	300	✪✪✪	Laurel, MD	Our Lady of Good Counsel
247Sports.com rated No. 92 offensive tackle nationally and No. 19 player in Maryland.						
Chris Whittaker	DL	6-3	260	✪✪✪	Hollywood, FL	Chaminade-Madonna
Ranked No. 66 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 160 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Had 77 tackles, including 22 tackles for loss, 10.5 quarterback sacks, and two fumbles recovered as a senior.						
Walker Wood	QB	6-0	190	✪✪✪	Lexington	Lafayette
USA Today All-American… 247Sports.com rated No. 4 player in Kentucky… All-State… As a senior, completed 203 of 321 passes for 3,047 yards and 30 touchdowns… Led team to championship game… Had 8,230 career yards passing and 74 touchdowns… Had 4,199 career rushing yards and 73 touchdowns.						
Jordan Wright	OL	6-5	250	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Dillard
247Sports.com rated No. 28 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 64 player in Florida…Had 25 quarterback sacks as a senior… Had six receiving touchdowns.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Promise of a Better Day Arrives for West

Nearly every Kentucky player remembers where he was last summer when Darius West went down in practice screaming and clutching his knee. A patellar tendon injury cost the likely starting free safety all of last season.

Teammate and former roommate Mike Edwards shakes his head and looks away when asked about it.

"To see him go through that was heartbreaking for me," Edwards said. "I can't even imagine what it was like for him."

West thought he'd finally put the injuries behind him. He had suffered a lower leg injury in 2014 and broke his tibia in high school.

But there he was, going through the brutal rehab process again last year, going to the training room 2-3 times a day, often early in the morning and staying late to rebuild strength in his leg. Teammates would stop in to check on him and try to remind him that better days were ahead.

Being able to practice some with his teammates again as they prepped for the TaxSlayer Bowl in December made West start to believe it, too.

Those promised better days seem to have arrived for the 6-foot, 210-pound safety, who came to Kentucky as a four-star recruit.

"I really started to appreciate being out there on the field with my brothers," said West, who has played in 10 career games with 17 tackles, mostly on special teams.

West makes a veteran secondary that helped UK finish fifth in the SEC in passing defense even stouter.

"He's one of our leaders, especially in the DB group," cornerback Derrick Baity said. "He's like the enforcer. It's good to have him back because now we have a leader with a voice and a leader that's an enforcer. He's coming on in a big way."

There has been some rust to knock off for West, but Kentucky's coaches say they saw improvement daily in the spring. He's already worked his way back to the No. 1 spot; he made four tackles in limited action during the spring game.

Darius West
Photo by Mark Zerof-USA TODAY Sports

"He's learning the game again, kind of recycling, getting his mind refreshed," defensive backs coach Steve Clinkscale said. "I just see a guy who's challenging himself, pushing himself hard to be better every day."

A better West means a better defense overall, Edwards said.

"He brings a whole different mentality; just passionate," his fellow starting safety said. "Him being out here just makes the whole team better. I like seeing him happy and out here again."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/kentucky

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

RB BENNY SNELL JR.

Even though he didn't get a carry until the third game of last season, Snell managed to break multiple freshman rushing records at UK, including 1,091 yards and 13 touchdowns. ... He led the nation in rushing touchdowns by a freshman despite sharing the load with another 1,000-yard rusher in Boom Williams. ... Carried 38 times for 192 yards against Missouri. ... The 5-11, 220 pound locomotive has only improved this offseason.

EMERGING STAR

LB JOSH ALLEN

Long, lanky and fast, Allen went from four tackles as a true freshman to 62 last season (seventh-best on team). He led UK in sacks with seven and finished third in tackles for loss with 8.5. ... Added some strength and bulk to his 6-5, 230-pound frame this spring; led the SEC in forced fumbles with four last season. ... He recorded seven or more tackles in four games last season.

TOP NEWCOMER

ATH LYNN BOWDEN

Mike Stoops and recruiting coordinator Vince Marrow, who are both from the tradition- and talent-rich northeast portion of Ohio, think the 6-1, 190-pound versatile athlete is the best player to come out of that area in a long time. ... "He's the type of guy where he changes the digits on the scoreboard," Stoops said of Bowden, who rushed for 2,277 yards, passed for 1,366 and totaled 57 touchdowns last year. ... Bowden seems a perfect fit in UK's wildcat formation.

WE NEED YOU
to support our ministry.

With more than 8,000 Kentucky children in out-of-home care, the need for loving homes is greater than ever. To learn more about how you can help support our ministry, please visit our website at sunrise.org or call 800.456.1386.

HELPING CHILDREN IN CRISIS SHINE.

sunrise.org

LSU TIGERS

For more coverage of the Tigers, visit lsu.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Canada **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Dave Aranda **STADIUM:** Tiger Stadium: 92,400

POPULAR, PASSIONATE ORGERON TAKES THE REINS

For all the upheaval LSU has endured in the past year, the one constant is the high expectations facing Ed Orgeron in his first full season as head coach.

A native son, the fiery Cajun from south Louisiana has inspired big hopes because of his unabashed enthusiasm, his passion for LSU and his connection to a rabid fan base that is eager to see what improvement the Tigers' regime change will produce.

"This is bigger than life," he said upon being named permanent head coach last November.

LSU was quick to fire 12-year veteran Les Miles after the Tigers lost two of their first four games last season, plummeting from a No. 5 preseason ranking. LSU won five of seven games with Orgeron in an interim position. He later added a bowl victory.

Miles came close to being terminated near the end of 2015, in part due to a stodgy offensive philosophy that hadn't been as productive as when Miles won the 2007 national championship, two conference titles and a school-record 77 percent of his games.

Miles finished 13-11 in his final 24 games against Power 5 conference teams, including five consecutive losses to Alabama and former LSU coach Nick Saban.

Alabama also beat a post-Miles LSU team last season, 10-0, but the Tigers' tenacity played a significant role in getting Orgeron the job he has long coveted.

Orgeron knows the importance of beating Alabama and well remembers how LSU's winningest coach, Charlie McClendon, lost his job in part because of his inability to defeat Bear Bryant with any amount of regularity.

Referring to Alabama during his introductory speech, Orgeron said, "You are judged by that game. That's the nature of the beast. I welcome it. I bring it on. I can't wait 'til the day we beat those guys."

To accomplish that goal, Orgeron has revamped his coaching staff. He brought in offensive coordinator Matt Canada from Pittsburgh and hired a new running backs coach (Tommie Robinson) and receivers coach (Mickey Joseph).

Known for operating a multiple scheme predicated on his quarterback's strength, Canada didn't initially hand over the reins to incumbent starter Danny Etling. After a solid spring, however, Etling most likely earned his way back into the starting role.

Orgeron, USC's interim head coach in 2013, has vowed to tone down the overbearing intensity he displayed as Ole Miss' head coach from 2005 to 2007. The Rebels finished 10-25 during his tenure.

OFFENSE

The hope is that LSU can continue the kind of attack it showed under veteran tight ends coach Steve Ensminger, who served as Orgeron's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach last season.

Before Ensminger began calling plays, LSU had scored only nine touchdowns while averaging 18 points per game. In eight games under Ensminger, LSU dramatically improved in every offensive category, averaging 32 points per game, while scoring 38 or more points five times and averaging 7.1 yards per play.

Admittedly, some opponents may not have been as competitive as others, but LSU previously had become predictable with an offense predicated on its running attack. Injuries that sidelined Leonard Fournette could have been disastrous if not for the emergence of Derrius Guice.

With his relentless style, Guice led the SEC in rushing yards (1,387) and ranked second in rushing yards per game (115.6). His 15 rushing touchdowns ranked second in the conference. Even with coordinator Matt Canada's desire to open up the offense, Guice's worth can't be ignored and will again be paramount to LSU's success.

"We believe you got to run the football," Canada said. "Running the football is a big deal ... but how we're going to run is dictated on our players, and (what the) defense does too."

Etling displayed a knack for taking advantage of what he sees with a growing maturity and grasp of the offense once he took over for starter Brandon Harris in the second quarter of the second game. For the year, Etling completed 160 of 269 passes for 2,123 yards, with 11 touchdowns and five interceptions. He had streaks of 101 and 93 passes without an interception.

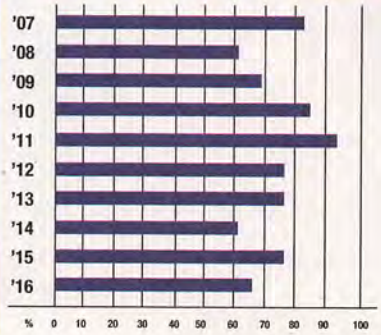
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	vs. BYU (Houston, TX)	9-4
Sept. 9	CHATTANOOGA	9-4
Sept. 16	at Mississippi State	6-7
Sept. 23	SYRACUSE	4-8
Sept. 30	TROY	10-3
Oct. 7	at Florida	9-4
Oct. 14	AUBURN	8-5
Oct. 21	at Ole Miss	5-7
Nov. 4	at Alabama	14-1
Nov. 11	ARKANSAS	7-6
Nov. 18	at Tennessee	9-4
Nov. 25	TEXAS A&M	8-5

RESULTS

	8-4, 5-3	
L	vs. Wisconsin (Green Bay, WI)	14-16
W	JACKSONVILLE STATE	34-13
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	23-20
L	at Auburn	13-18
W	MISSOURI	42-7
W	SOUTHERN MISS	45-10
W	OLE MISS	38-21
L	ALABAMA	0-10
W	at Arkansas	38-10
L	FLORIDA	10-16
W	at Texas A&M	54-39
	Citrus Bowl	
W	vs. Louisville	29-9

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Baton Rouge, La.

2016:
8-4 overall, 5-3 SEC (T-2nd, West)

COACH:
Ed Orgeron — At LSU: 6-2, 1 year; overall: 22-29, 6 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
13; 7 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Derrius Guice, WR D.J. Chark, OT K.J. Malone, OT Toby Weathersby, DE Christian LaCouture, LB Arden Key, SS John Battle, CB Donte Jackson

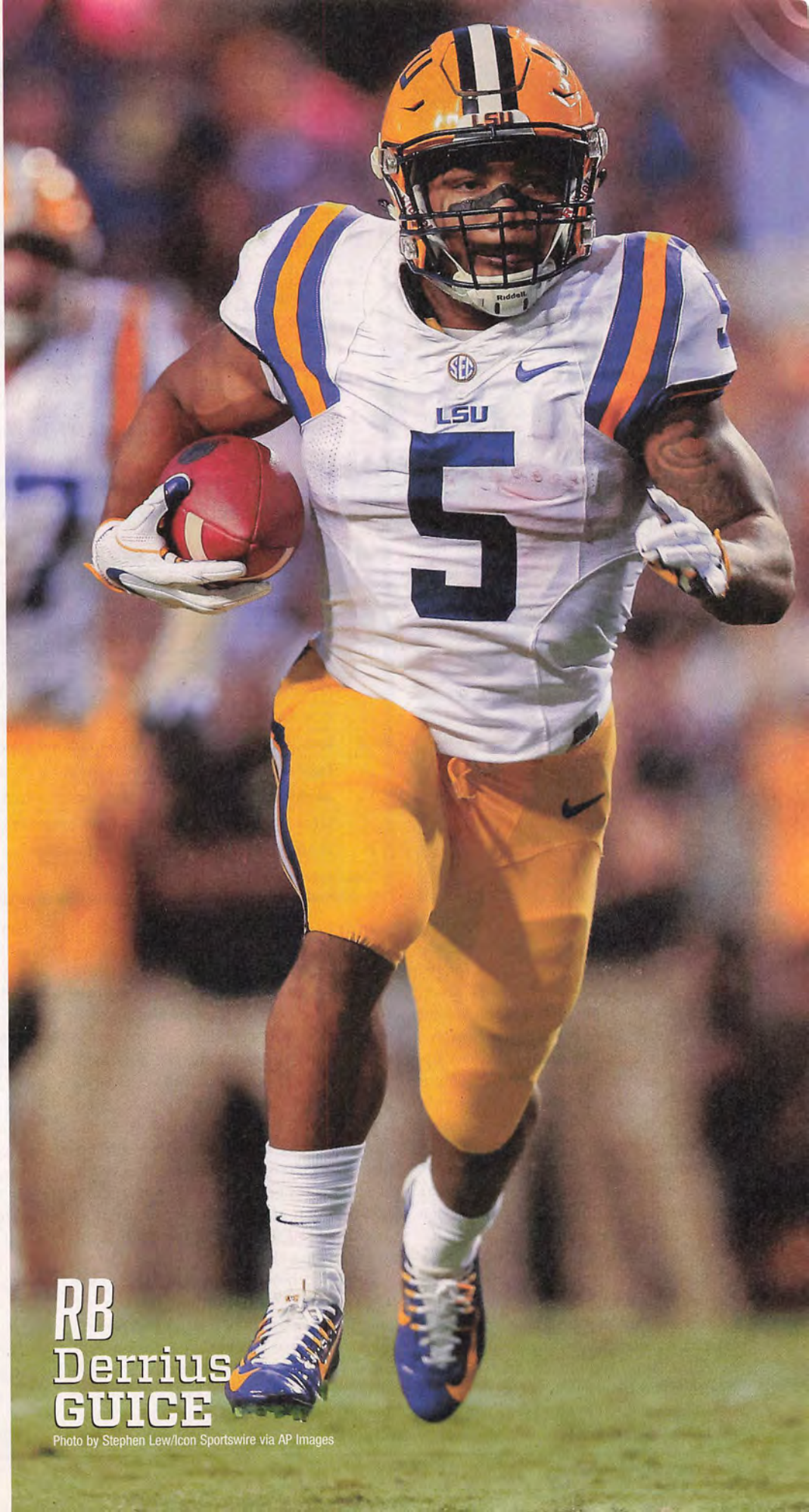
PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Athleticism abounds, as it has for the Tigers in past years. Highly acclaimed Guice leads a stable of running backs who were the focal point of the past regime. The offensive line has experience, as does QB Danny Etling. The defensive line features five fifth-year players. LSU finished strong in providing evidence of a return to glory.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
A second-year coordinator must figure out how to cope with lack of defensive depth, particularly among the linebackers. The preferred offensive style of play remains uncertain under a first-year coordinator. There will be retooling and new ideas on both sides of the ball. How LSU adapts to change could well determine its fate.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Leonard Fournette, WR Malachi Dupree, OL Ethan Pocic, OL Josh Boutte, DE Lewis Neal, LB Kendall Beckwith, LB Duke Riley, CB Tre'Davious White, FS Jamal Adams

OVERVIEW:
The Tigers certainly won't lack for aggression under the emotionally charged Orgeron. That bodes well for a speedy yet stout defense that must avoid injuries that could hamper its production. The offense promises to display much-needed diversity. LSU has the potential to become a national powerhouse again but must do more than show glimpses of its underlying potential.

KEY NUMBER:
16 The number of touchdowns the defense allowed last season, finishing first nationally in that category. That also matches the number of touchdowns Guice scored. Guice rushed for 15 and added another on a 1-yard reception.



RB Derrius GUICE

Photo by Stephen Lew/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

LB

Arden Key

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Danny Etling***	Sr.	Adept at getting the ball into hands of playmakers.	Justin McMillan, So.
RB	**Derrius Guice***	Jr.	Set two school records during breakout season in 2016.	Darrel Williams, Sr.
FB	**John David Moore***	Sr.	Dedicated hard worker but oft-injured former walk-on.	Bry'Kiethon Mouton, Jr.
WR	**D.J. Chark***	Sr..	Poised to take command of receiving corps.	Drake Davis, So.
WR	Russell Gage	Sr.	Gifted athlete who emerged toward end of last season.	Dee Anderson, So.
TE	Foster Moreau	Jr.	Only returner with any receptions at the position.	Caleb Roddy, So.
LT	**K.J. Malone***	Sr.	Combines leadership, versatility with adept run blocking.	Austin Deculus, Fr.
LG	Garrett Brumfield	Jr.	Local talent ready to step into starting role.	Willie Allen, Fr.
C	**Will Clapp***	Jr.	Versatile veteran takes over at a new position.	Lloyd Cushenberry, Fr..
RG	**Maea Teuhema***	Jr.	Third-year starter who gives line much-needed stability.	Donavaughn Campbell, So.
RT	Toby Weathersby	Jr.	Ready to bounce back from injuries that slowed him.	Adrian Magee, So.
PK	Connor Culp	Fr.	Untested redshirt looking to duplicate high school success.	Josh Gonsoulin, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Christian LaCouture	Sr.	Turned down an opportunity to enter NFL Draft.	Rashard Lawrence, So.
DT	**Greg Gilmore***	Sr.	Quickly established himself in middle of revamped front.	Ed Alexander, So.
DE	Frank Herron	Sr.	Refocused after he was sidelined with off-field issues.	Deondre Clark, Sr.
LB	**Arden Key***	Jr.	Poised to take command and build upon his credentials.	Sci Martin, So.
LB	Devin White	So.	Looking for discipline to refine his big-play explosiveness.	Isaiah Washington, So.
LB	Donnie Alexander	Sr.	Fully recovered from shoulder surgery in the spring.	Devin Voorhies, Sr.
LB	Michael Divinity	So.	Showed promise, athleticism in nine games in 2016.	Jonathan Rucker, Sr.
CB	**Donte Jackson***	Jr.	Also showcases speed on special teams, track team.	Saivion Smith, So.
CB	**Kevin Toliver***	Jr.	Looking to regain early form after sophomore slump.	Andraez Williams, Fr.
SS	**John Battle***	Sr.	Made seamless transition in replacing injured starter.	Grant Delpit, Fr.
FS	Ed Paris	Sr.	Former standout cornerback with big shoes to fill.	JaCoby Stevens, Fr.
P	**Josh Growden***	So.	Placed 22 punts inside 20-yard line last season.	Zach Von Rosenberg, Fr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

Junior D.J. Chark figures to become Etling's primary target and flourish in Canada's offense after catching 26 passes for 466 yards and three touchdowns last season. Senior Russell Gage should complement Chark after his late emergence last season.

New to LSU will be an H-back, the hybrid fullback/tight end position. Senior fullback John David Moore and junior Foster Moreau will likely man that spot. The new position is in keeping with what Orgeron wants from Canada.

"I'm really excited about Matt Canada and what he has brought to our football team, what he has brought to our staff," Orgeron said. "He is an energetic guy."

That bodes well for a veteran, interchangeable offensive line that returns starters in senior left tackle K.J. Malone, junior right guard Maea Teuhema and junior center Will Clapp. Adding size and power at the other two spots will be a pair of juniors in left guard Garrett Brumfield and right tackle Toby Weathersby.

DEFENSE

The long-awaited return of end Christian LaCouture will strengthen a unit thin at linebacker and in need of filling a profound loss in the secondary.

LaCouture is new to the 3-4 alignment that second-year coordinator Dave Aranda instituted last season, but LaCouture figures to make a smooth transition, as did most everyone a year ago when LSU finished 10th nationally, allowing an average of 314.5 yards per game. A fifth-year senior and two-year starter at tackle, LaCouture redshirted last season after tearing his ACL in preseason practice.

Opposite the 6-5, 301-pound LaCouture will be senior Frank Herron, who has the potential to excel if he doesn't trip himself up again. An unspecified suspension kept the 6-4, 305-pound Herron from traveling to last year's season opener, and an academic issue prevented him from joining his teammates at the Citrus Bowl.

Sandwiched between the two will be prototypical senior nose tackle Greg Gilmore, a 6-4, 308-pounder who started every game last season while making 34 tackles, forcing a fumble and recovering another.

They'll be under the tutelage of veteran line coach Pete Jenkins, who is in his second tour of duty with LSU. When Orgeron became interim head coach last September, he lured Jenkins out of retirement to replace him as defensive line coach on an interim basis. The 75-year-old Jenkins later agreed to take the full-time job.

"They (linemen) are going to improve, and they improve on a daily basis with that guy," Orgeron said of Jenkins.

While the line welcomes back LaCouture, the linebacking corps is anticipating the return of Arden Key, who missed spring practice because of undisclosed personal reasons. The aptly named Key is critical to LSU's productivity after a season in which he set a school record with 12 sacks among his 56 tackles.

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Arden Key DE/LB 6-6 238 4.74 Jr.

Despite weighing less than some running backs, Key could prove to be the elite prospect in the entire SEC in 2017. Disruptive pass rushers rank second in importance to only quarterbacks in today's pass-happy NFL, and Key boasts an exceptional combination of initial burst, bend around the edge and length to lasso ballcarriers.

Key proved an immediate difference-maker for LSU, playing in all 12 games as a true freshman and leading the Tigers with nine QB hurries, along with 41 tackles, including 6.5 for loss and five sacks. He was considerably more productive in his second season, emerging as a verifiable star with 56 tackles, including 14.5 for loss and 12 sacks, with 11 quarterback hurries and three forced fumbles.

Whether rushing from the three-point stance or standing up — and no matter if you call him a defensive end or an outside linebacker — Key possesses the explosive first step to leave tackles in his wake. Unlike most defenders with his length, Key shows excellent balance and flexibility to run the arc, scraping the edge and closing in a flash.

Teams, of course, will want to know the specifics behind Key's unexpected leave of absence following the conclusion of the 2016 season.

2. Derrius Guice	**RB**	**5-11**	**212**	**4.53**	**Jr.**
3. Will Clapp	**OG/C**	**6-5**	**309**	**5.07**	**Jr.**
4. D.J. Chark	**WR**	**6-3**	**187**	**4.42**	**Sr.**
5. Christian LaCouture	**DT**	**6-5**	**301**	**5.12**	**Sr.**

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

Sophomores Devin White and Michael Divinity have potential but have yet to start, while senior Donnie Alexander is poised to resume the play that earned him starts in the last two games of the season.

As has become the norm, LSU boasts athleticism throughout the secondary but must replace highly regarded strong safety Jamal Adams. That job has fallen upon senior John Battle, who replaced an injured starter at free safety for the final seven games last season and responded with 39 total tackles, including 21 solo stops.

Returning junior starters Donte Jackson and Kevin Toliver provide experience at cornerback, with strong safety Ed Paris ready to lend his expertise to the group. After just nine interceptions last season, LSU is hopeful of producing double-digit thefts in the second year of Aranda's system.

"We are excited about the things that he wants us to do," Orgeron said of Aranda. "His notebook is full."

SPECIAL TEAMS

The new-look Tigers promise to become more aggressive with junior speedster Donte Jackson assuming the mantle of primary return specialist.

After averaging a team-high 23.4 yards on seven kickoff returns last season, Jackson will add punt returns to his duties. A cornerback by trade, Jackson also has practiced running jet sweeps from the wide receiver spot offensively.

Jackson will operate under the watchful eyes of five assistant coaches who will share special-team duties and answer to newly added consultant and former New Orleans Saints special teams coordinator Greg McMahon.

Sophomore punter Josh Growden is hopeful of improving upon last year's 41.4-yard average. Redshirt freshman Connor Culp highlights a list of untested place-kicking candidates, with senior Cameron Gamble expected to handle kickoffs again.

QB Danny Etling

Photo by Joe Robbins

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

LSU opens against BYU in Houston at NRG Stadium, and Cougars' quarterback Tanner Mangum is not to be overlooked. A road game against Mississippi State to kick off SEC play on Sept. 16 is no bargain, considering Bulldogs quarterback Nick Fitzgerald.

But, really, it shouldn't be a surprise if the Tigers are 5-0 heading into October, where things get even tougher, opening the month at Florida and vs. Auburn. The game in Gainesville is a makeup for the 2016 game that got moved to Baton Rouge because of Hurricane Matthew.

Everyone has Nov. 4 circled — at Alabama. The Tigers have lost six in a row in the series.

In cross-division games, LSU adds Tennessee and loses Missouri. The Tigers haven't played the Vols since 2011.

— Dave Moormann

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.6	T-73
Rushing	224.5	23
Passing	162.9	114
Total	387.5	77
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.5	5
Rushing	152.7	46
Passing	164.2	3
Total	316.8	9
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+0.23	T-48

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.8	44
Rushing	256.8	7
Passing	180.4	105
Total	437.3	39
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.3	41
Rushing	122.9	17
Passing	224.3	65
Total	347.2	25
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.58	26

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.3	68
Rushing	233.0	21
Passing	190.1	101
Total	423.1	59
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	15.8	5
Rushing	117.3	13
Passing	197.2	23
Total	314.5	10
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	T-67

NOTEBOOK

LSU had to finish its spring game indoors because of lightning near Tiger Stadium, which prevented full stat-keeping, for whatever that's worth.

Afterward, coach **Ed Orgeron** was asked about the quarterback competition between veteran **Danny Etling** and sophomore **Justin McMillan**, who took second-team reps in the spring game. Redshirt freshman **Lindsey Scott Jr.** and early-enrolled freshman **Lowell Narcisse** will continue to try to climb the ladder in the fall.

"Here is the deal," Orgeron said after the spring game.

"Nobody has earned the starting spot and you saw that tonight. If we had to name a starter tonight it is not a clear-cut winner. Most of the spring Danny has been better. Underneath the pressure, the guys did not perform the way we wanted them to, so they are going to have to show me who is able to perform under pressure to be the LSU quarterback."

• Former starting quarterback Brandon Harris and backup center Andy Dodd during the offseason announced plans to transfer for their final years of eligibility.

Harris said he will play as a graduate transfer for North Carolina, choosing the Tar Heels over Texas and Arizona. Dodd opted to remain in state to play his senior season at lower-division McNeese State.

Harris started in 2015 and in the first two games of 2016 before being replaced by Danny Etling. Dodd started one of the six games in which he appeared last season.

• Senior defensive end **Christian LaCouture** has been awarded jersey No. 18 in the continuation of a tradition begun in 2003.

Quarterback Matt Mauck, wearing No. 18, guided LSU to the national championship that season. Mauck handed down the number to running back Jacob Hester, who helped the Tigers to the 2007 national title. Since then, each year the number is given to someone who exemplifies success and selflessness in the eyes of those in the football program.

A two-year starter, LaCouture missed all of last season after tearing his ACL in preseason practice.

• First-year wide receiver coach and Louisiana native **Mickey Joseph** is the older brother of new Denver Broncos coach Vance Joseph and the cousin of North Carolina assistant coach Terry Joseph.

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks		Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
	Myles Brennan	QB	6-4	177	Fr.	Long Beach, MS
16	Danny Etling	QB	6-1	215	Sr.	Terre Haute, IN
8	Caleb Lewis	QB	6-4	218	So.	Lakeland, FL
12	Justin McMillan	QB	6-2	196	So.	Cedar Hill, TX
2	Lowell Narcisse	QB	6-2	237	Fr.	St. James
17	Tiger Scheyd	QB	6-1	188	Jr.	Miramar Beach, FL
14	Lindsey Scott Jr.	QB	5-11	210	Fr.	Zachary
Running Backs		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
43	Matt Brock	FB	6-1	214	So.	Chattanooga, TN
4	Nick Brossette	RB	6-0	209	Jr.	Baton Rouge
	Tory Carter	FB	6-1	265	Fr.	Leesburg, GA
41	David Ducre	FB	6-0	236	Jr.	Slidell
	Clyde Edwards-Helaire	RB	5-7	209	Fr.	Baton Rouge
27	Lanard Fournette	RB	5-10	199	So.	New Orleans
33	Trey Gallman	FB	6-2	257	Jr.	Prairieville
5	Derrius Guice	RB	5-11	212	Jr.	Baton Rouge
34	Reshaud Henry	RB	5-9	199	Sr.	Ponchatoula
44	J.D. Moore	FB	6-4	241	Sr.	Ruston
47	Bry'Kiethon Mouton	FB	6-1	265	Jr.	Lafayette
28	Darrel Williams	RB	6-1	233	Sr.	Marrero
Wide Receivers		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
11	Dee Anderson	WR	6-5	202	So.	DeSoto, TX
87	Justin Beckwith	WR	6-2	207	Fr.	Jackson
7	D.J. Chark	WR	6-3	187	Sr.	Alexandria
25	Drake Davis	WR	6-3	217	So.	Baton Rouge
19	Derrick Dillon	WR	5-11	181	So.	Franklinton
83	Russell Gage	WR	6-0	179	Sr.	Baton Rouge
31	Justin Jones	WR	5-8	177	Fr.	Dallas, TX
39	Michael Kershaw	WR	5-7	160	So.	Shreveport
29	Louis Landrum	WR	5-10	189	Fr.	New Orleans
89	Tyler Liser	WR	6-0	184	Fr.	San Antonio, TX
	Racey McMath	WR	6-3	213	Fr.	New Orleans
86	Mannie Netherly	WR	6-3	185	Fr.	Crosby, TX
30	Michael Ostrom	WR	6-0	180	So.	Baton Rouge
10	Stephen Sullivan	WR	6-6	235	So.	Donaldsonville
82	Jalen Williams	WR	6-3	221	Fr.	Opelousas
Tight Ends		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
84	Foster Moreau	TE	6-6	250	Jr.	New Orleans
80	Jamal Pettigrew	TE	6-7	250	Fr.	New Orleans
85	Caleb Roddy	TE	6-5	276	So.	Denham Springs
88	Jacory Washington	TE	6-6	249	Jr.	Westlake
Offensive Lineman		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
58	Jibrail Abdul-Aziz	OL	6-2	289	Jr.	Baton Rouge
74	Willie Allen	OL	6-7	310	Fr.	River Ridge
78	Garrett Brumfield	OG	6-3	305	Jr.	Baton Rouge
71	Donavaughn Campbell	OL	6-4	344	So.	Ponchatoula
	Saahdiq Charles	OL	6-5	317	Fr.	Jackson, MS
64	Will Clapp	C	6-5	309	Jr.	New Orleans
79	Lloyd Cushenberry III	C	6-4	306	Fr.	Geismar
76	Austin Deculus	OL	6-6	345	Fr.	Cypress, TX
	Edward Ingram	OL	6-3	354	Fr.	DeSoto, TX
54	Rory Luke	OL	6-4	272	So.	New Orleans
73	Adrian Magee	OG	6-5	309	So.	Franklinton
63	K.J. Malone	OT	6-4	303	Sr.	Ruston
62	Justin Mikush	OL	6-4	281	Jr.	Tomball, TX
61	Leon Pinto	OL	6-3	278	Fr.	Houston, TX
65	Jakori Savage	OL	6-5	300	Fr.	Bay Minette, AL
69	Turner Simmers	OL	6-4	274	Jr.	Prairieville
67	Michael Smith	OL	6-2	290	Fr.	Kileen, TX
	Seth Stewart	OL	6-6	320	Fr.	Point Pleasant, WV
75	Maea Teuhema	OL	6-5	315	Jr.	Keller, TX
66	Toby Weathersby	OT	6-5	302	Jr.	Houston, TX

Defensive Linemen		Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
85	Jamil Abdul-Aziz	DL	6-2	293	Fr.	Baton Rouge
95	Ed Alexander	NT	6-2	333	So.	Hammond
46	Andre Anthony	DE	6-5	219	Fr.	New Orleans
98	Deondre Clark	DE	6-4	272	Sr.	Oklahoma City, OK
44	Clifton Escort III	DL	6-0	221	Fr.	Morgan City
	Neil Farrell Jr.	DE	6-4	285	Fr.	Mobile, AL
99	Greg Gilmore	NT	6-4	308	Sr.	Hope Mills, NC
97	Frank Herron	DE	6-4	305	Sr.	Memphis, TN
54	Justin Kairdolf	DE	6-2	265	Fr.	Baton Rouge
18	Christian LaCouture	DE	6-5	301	Sr.	Lincoln, NE
90	Rashard Lawrence	DE	6-3	301	So.	Monroe
96	Glen Logan	DE	6-4	315	Fr.	Destrehan
	Aaron Moffitt	DE	6-2	253	Fr.	Baton Rouge
59	Seth Newsome	DE	6-0	276	Fr.	Fredericksburg, VA
	Tyler Shelvin	NT	6-2	380	Fr.	Lafayette
93	Justin Thomas	DE	6-5	264	Fr.	Spanish Fort, AL
94	Isaiah Washington	DE	6-4	236	So.	New Orleans
Linebackers		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
48	Donnie Alexander	LB	6-1	212	Sr.	New Orleans
47	Chance Barney	LB	6-1	220	Jr.	Covington
	K'Lavon Chaisson	LB	6-4	227	Fr.	Houston, TX
45	Michael Divinity Jr.	LB	6-2	234	So.	Marrero
50	Layton Garnett	LB	6-4	247	Fr.	West Monroe
49	Arden Key	LB	6-6	238	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
87	Sci Martin	LB	6-4	240	So.	New Orleans
56	M.J. Patterson	LB	6-4	225	Sr.	Winnfield
	Jacob Phillips	LB	6-3	226	Fr.	Nashville, TN
	Patrick Queen	LB	6-1	218	Fr.	Livonia
51	Jonathan Rucker	LB	6-1	249	Sr.	Ponchatoula
	Tyler Taylor	LB	6-1	235	Fr.	Buford, GA
43	Ray Thornton	LB	6-3	222	Fr.	Killeen, TX
35	Devin Voorhies	LB	6-2	223	Sr.	Woodville, MS
58	Vondero Weir	LB	6-2	248	Fr.	Baton Rouge
40	Devin White	LB	6-1	255	So.	Springhill
Defensive Backs		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
26	John Battle	S	6-2	202	Sr.	Hallandale, FL
42	Caleb Brown	DB	6-1	195	Fr.	Stonewall
9	Grant Delpit	S	6-3	191	Fr.	Houston, TX
12	Micah Dickens	CB	5-11	195	Sr.	Dry Prong
22	Kristian Fulton	DB	6-1	188	So.	Metairie
	Todd Harris Jr.	S	5-11	180	Fr.	Plaquemine
1	Donte Jackson	DB	5-11	173	Jr.	Metairie
	Jontre Kirklin	CB	6-0	180	Fr.	Lutcher
17	Xavier Lewis	CB	6-0	190	So.	LaPlace
31	Cameron Lewis	DB	6-2	196	Fr.	Monroe
30	Eric Monroe	DB	6-0	191	Fr.	Houston, TX
21	Ed Paris	CB	6-1	203	Sr.	Arlington, TX
8	Saivion Smith	CB	6-2	192	So.	St. Petersburg, FL
3	JaCoby Stevens	S	6-2	214	Fr.	Murfreesboro, TN
23	Corey Thompson	S	6-2	222	Sr.	Missouri City, TX
2	Kevin Toliver II	CB	6-2	193	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
	Kary Vincent Jr.	CB	5-10	178	Fr.	Port Arthur, TX
41	Abraham Wallace	DB	6-0	189	Jr.	Baton Rouge
32	Tony Westly	DB	6-1	175	Jr.	St. Gabriel
29	Andraez Williams	DB	6-2	175	Fr.	Shreveport
Specialist		**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
34	Connor Culp	PK	5-11	186	Fr.	Phoenix, AZ
50	Blake Ferguson	SNP	6-4	227	So.	Buford, GA
36	Cameron Gamble	PK	5-11	189	Sr.	Flower Mound, TX
35	Jack Gonsoulin	PK	5-9	165	So.	Baton Rouge
38	Josh Growden	P	6-2	198	So.	Sydney, Australia
46	Zach Von Rosenberg	P	6-5	250	Fr.	Lake Charles

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On Ed Orgeron:** "Ed will do a great job at LSU. One, he's a Cajun. Two, he's been in the SEC. Ed ain't the same guy he was at Ole Miss (when he went 3-21 in the SEC in three years as the Rebels head coach). He's a different Ed."

• **On new coordinators:** "(OC) Matt Canada did a good job at Pitt. Pitt cut up Clemson's (butt). With Les Miles, the offense was as imaginative as you and I with crayons and color pencils. (DC) Dave Aranda might have been good in the Big Ten, but he's just a guy to me in the SEC."

• **On the offense:** "The problem is, they don't have a quarterback. They can't throw the ball. And No. 5 (running back Derrius Guice) is a helluva player. But any way you cut it, the quarterback situation has got to be resolved. The quarterback is average as grits."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Etling	11	135.6	160	269	5	59.5	2123	11	80	193.0
B. Harris	4	95.9	13	25	2	52.0	139	1	31	34.8

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
M. Dupre	12	41	593	14.5	3	63	49.4
T. Dural	11	28	280	10.0	1	21	25.5
D.J. Chark	12	26	466	17.9	3	80	38.8

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Guice	12	183	1428	41	1387	7.6	15	96	115.6
L. Fournette	7	129	873	30	843	6.5	8	78	120.4
D. Williams	11	52	243	10	233	4.5	3	22	21.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Riley 93, K. Beckwith 91, J. Adams 76
Tackles for loss: A. Key 14.5, D. Riley 9, D. Godchaux 8.5
Sacks: A. Key 12, D. Godchaux 6.5, T. Bower 4
Interceptions: D. Jackson 2, T. White 2, five tied with 1

247SPORTS TIGERS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

JaCoby Stevens, S
The five-star recruit is an elite athlete who makes plays on the back end of the defense. The 6-2, 214-pound prospect covers plenty of ground, plays fast, and is willing to deliver the big hit. He should factor into the Tigers' secondary this fall.

K'Lavon Chaisson, DE
The four-star recruit might have been the best pure pass-rusher in the 2017 class. At 6-4, 227 pounds and with elite burst off the line of scrimmage, look for Chaisson to get action if the down and distance indicate passing situations.

Tyler Shelvin, DT
LSU has a need at the defensive tackle position and the 6-2, 375-pound Shelvin should be in the rotation his first year on campus. Shelvin is a wide-body that can eat up blockers and clog the middle of the interior line.

SLEEPER

Jontre Kirklin, CB
The three-star recruit is making the transition from high school quarterback to corner in college. However, the 6-0, 180-pound Kirklin is a dynamic athlete who has the potential become a difference-maker once given time to learn the nuances of his new position.

2018 NEEDS

LSU will be searching to land an elite running back who can make an early impact on the field in this next recruiting cycle. Leonard Fournette departed this offseason, and Derrius Guice likely bounces next, therefore the Tigers are looking to carry on the tradition of having a top ball carrier in the backfield.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

1	15	7	0
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	23
Average Stars	3.74
Total Stars	86
National Rank: 7	SEC: 3

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Myles Brennan	QB	6-4	177	✪✪✪✪	Long Beach, MS	St. Stanislaus
247Sports.com rated No. 6 pro-style quarterback nationally… Participated in Under Armour All-American game… Had 16,168 career all-purpose yards, 15,138 passing yards and 166 touchdowns… As a senior, completed 275 passes for 3,982 yards and 48 touchdowns with three interceptions… Led team to two consecutive state championship games in 2014 and 2015.						
Tory Carter	FB	6-1	265	✪✪✪	Leesburg, GA	Lee County
Ranked No. 3 fullback nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 52 tackles, including 11 tackles for loss, and nine quarterback sacks as a senior.						
K'Lavon Chaisson	LB	6-4	227	✪✪✪✪	Houston, TX	North Shore
247Sports.com rated No. 4 weakside defensive end and No. 37 player nationally and No. 5 player in Texas… All-State… As a senior, helped team to state championship… Had 50 tackles, including 13 tackles for loss, 15.5 quarterback sacks, and three fumbles caused.						
Saahdiq Charles	OL	6-5	317	✪✪✪✪	Jackson	Madison-Ridgeland Academy
Ranked No. 19 offensive guard nationally and No. 7 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com						
Austin Deculus	OL	6-6	345	✪✪✪✪	Cypress, TX	Cy-Fair
247Sports.com rated No. 10 offensive tackle and No. 48 player nationally and No. 7 player in Texas… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
Grant Delpit	S	6-3	191	✪✪✪✪	Houston, TX	IMG Academy (FL)
Ranked No. 9 safety and No. 65 player nationally and No. 11 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Had 47 tackles, including one tackle for loss, six passes broken up, and five interceptions, returning two for touchdowns, as a senior. Early enrollee.						
Clyde Edwards-Helaire	RB	5-7	209	✪✪✪✪	Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge Catholic
247Sports.com rated No. 5 all-purpose back nationally… As a senior, had 496 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns.						
Neil Farrell, Jr.	DE	6-4	285	✪✪✪	Mobile, AL	Murphy
Ranked No. 17 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Two-time All-State… Had 101 tackles, including 28 tackles for loss, 13 quarterback sacks and 14 quarterback hurries as a senior… As a junior, had 86 tackles, including 17 tackles for loss.						
Todd Harris, Jr.	S	5-11	180	✪✪✪✪	Plaquemine	Plaquemine
247Sports rated No. 3 player in Louisiana… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State… As a senior, had 53 tackles, nine passes broken up, one interception, and one fumble recovered… Helped team to state quarterfinals.						
Edward Ingram	OL	6-3	354	✪✪✪✪	DeSoto, TX	DeSoto
Ranked No. 13 offensive guard nationally by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Helped team to 16-0 record and state championship as a senior.						
Jontre Kirklin	CB	6-0	180	✪✪✪	Lutcher	Lutcher
Projected to make transition from dual-threat quarterback to the secondary… 247Sports.com rated No. 25 player in Louisiana… All-State… Had more than 7,500 career passing yards, 3,000 yards rushing and 147 touchdowns.						
Racey McMath	WR	6-3	213	✪✪✪	New Orleans	Edna Karr
Ranked No. 89 wide receiver nationally and No. 22 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… All-State… Helped team to state championship games in junior and senior seasons.						
Aaron Moffitt	DE	6-2	253	✪✪✪	Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge Catholic
Ranked No. 33 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Two-time All-State… As a junior, had 54 tackles, including 14 tackles for loss, and 11 quarterback sacks.						
Lowell Narcisse	QB	6-2	237	✪✪✪✪	St. James	St. James
247Sports.com rated No. 9 dual-threat quarterback nationally and No. 10 player in Louisiana… Missed senior season with knee injury… Completed 23 of 36 passes for 296 yards, six touchdowns and no interceptions, playing only late in his junior season… Had 305 yards rushing and four touchdowns… As a sophomore, completed 205 of 358 passes for 3,124 yards and 31 touchdowns with 13 interceptions… Had 1,402 yards rushing and 18 touchdowns.						
Mannie Netherly	WR	6-3	185	✪✪✪✪	Crosby, TX	Crosby
Ranked No. 37 wide receiver nationally by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 1,634 yards passing and 19 touchdowns… Had 612 yards rushing and nine touchdowns.						
Jacob Phillips	LB	6-3	226	✪✪✪✪	Nashville, TN	East Nashville Magnet
247Sports.com rated No. 46 linebacker nationally and No. 4 player in Tennessee… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Averaged 12.3 tackles per game as a senior… Had seven tackles for loss.						
Patrick Queen	LB	6-1	218	✪✪✪✪	Livonia	Livonia
Ranked No. 12 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… All-State… As a senior, had 1,487 yards rushing and 19 touchdowns… Had 66 tackles (42 solo), including seven tackles for loss, and six passes broken up… Had 1,731 all-purpose yards.						
Tyler Shelvin	NT	6-2	375	✪✪✪✪	Lafayette	Notre Dame High
247Sports.com rated No. 4 defensive tackle and No. 52 player nationally and No. 1 player in Louisiana… Played in Under Armour All-American Game.						
JaCoby Stevens	S	6-2	214	✪✪✪✪✪	Murfreesboro, TN	Oakland
Ranked No. 1 safety and No. 18 player nationally and No. 2 player in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 61 tackles and nine interceptions as a senior… Had 34 receptions for 689 yards and 12 touchdowns						
Seth Stewart	OL	6-6	320	✪✪✪	Point Pleasant, WV	Point Pleasant
247Sports.com rated No. 4 player in West Virginia… All-State… As a senior, helped team to 11-1 record.						
Tyler Taylor	LB	6-1	235	✪✪✪✪	Buford, GA	Lanier
247Sports.com rated No. 10 inside linebacker nationally… Had 239 tackles, 11 quarterback sacks and four interceptions in 24 games during junior and senior seasons… Had 190 all-purpose yards and scored two receiving touchdowns.						
Justin Thomas	DE	6-5	264	✪✪✪	Spanish Fort, AL	Spanish Fort
Ranked No. 19 strongside defensive end nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 152 career tackles and 21 quarterback sacks… As a senior, had 57 tackles and seven quarterback sacks.						
Kary Vincent, Jr.	CB	5-10	178	✪✪✪✪	Port Arthur, TX	Port Arthur Memorial
247Sports.com rated No. 12 cornerback nationally and No. 12 player in Texas… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had seven interceptions, returning three for touchdowns, as a senior… As a junior, had 51 tackles, five interceptions, and returned two kicks for touchdowns.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Battle out to show he's next great LSU safety

If common ground means anything, senior strong safety John Battle is on solid footing with his connections to past acclaimed LSU defensive backs.

Battle hails from Hallandale, less than 30 minutes from the southeast Florida hometown of former LSU All-America cornerback Patrick Peterson, now starring with the Arizona Cardinals.

Just like Ryan Clark, an EPSN analyst after playing free safety for LSU and the Pittsburgh Steelers, Battle is media savvy. He did radio work in high school and used his Citrus Bowl gift package money last December to buy a Canon Rebel digital camera.

LSU Pro Day was among the numerous events he's captured on film. His subjects included Jamal Adams, the highly touted former LSU strong safety and the very player he is being asked to replace this season.

Before Battle finds himself on the other side of the lens at Pro Day, he must prove that he has more than just anecdotal attributes similar to those who came before him. He must demonstrate he can produce in a pinch as he did last season, when he capably replaced injured free safety Rickey Jefferson in the starting lineup before the sixth game of the season.

Adams is "a hard guy to replace," said Battle, who began last season as Adams' backup. "Hopefully I can play up to him."

If the 6-2, 202-pound Battle comes close, he has Adams to thank for contributing to his development. Among other tricks of the trade, Battle learned how to watch film properly from Adams. Adams also taught by example with his energetic style that led to valued run support and tenacious tackling.

"(Adams') knack for getting to the ball is something I've tried to pick up," Battle said.

Battle followed Adams' lead a year ago in amassing 39 total tackles, tied with cornerback Donte Jackson for the most among returning defensive backs. Battle made five tackles in a 29-9 Citrus Bowl win over Louisville as LSU handcuffed Heisman Trophy quarterback Lamar Jackson.

John Battle

Photo by Andy Altenburger/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

There are concerns, though. Battle missed the spring game with what coach Ed Oregon called "nagging injuries" that will be "fixed" by the season. Early enrollee Grant Delpit started in Battle's place and impressed Orgeron.

Delpit "proved ... that he could make plays," Orgeron said. "He's a guy that we may consider to start."

Not to be outdone, Battle is ready to take on all comers and give it his best shot.

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/lsu

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

RB DERRIUS GUICE

No matter how LSU restructures its offense, he is sure to be the focal point of those plans. ... More than made up for an injury to Leonard Fournette last season, as Guice became the only player in school history to twice rush for more than 250 yards in a game — 252 at Arkansas, 285 at Texas A&M. ... Looking to become the first player in school history to lead the SEC in rushing yards in consecutive seasons.

EMERGING STAR

WR D.J. CHARK

Should become the go-to receiver after finally getting a chance to start last season after two years of limited activity. ... Made the most of his six starts with 26 receptions and three touchdowns. ... As the top returning receiver, his combination of speed and sure hands makes him a threat anywhere on the field. ... His longest reception last season covered 80 yards and helped him to average 17.9 yards per catch.

TOP NEWCOMER

S JACOBY STEVENS

Despite being a true freshman, the numerous holes to plug in the secondary make the strong safety from Tennessee a valuable asset. As an early enrollee, he got a head start on the experience he'll need to compete in the SEC. ... Rated as the nation's top safety prospect in the 247Sports Composite. ... He intercepted nine passes as a high school senior. ... He added 61 tackles to go along with 34 receptions offensively.

THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING YOU LOVE ABOUT DESTIN, FLORIDA

For Our Latest Special Offers, please visit www.pelican-beach.com or call (888) 735-4226

The Resorts of Pelican Beach is located at the heart of the Destin resort area and offers superb condominium accommodations and resort amenities - close to Destin's popular restaurants, nightlife and the Destin Harbor. Golf, fish, shop or simply just enjoy our world-famous, white-sand beach. After one visit, you'll understand why so many of our guests choose to visit, again!

RESORTS OF PELICAN BEACH

On the Beach in Destin, Florida!

OLE MISS REBELS

For more coverage of the Rebels, visit olemiss.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Longo **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Wesley McGriff **STADIUM:** Vaught-Hemingway Stadium: 64,038

OLE MISS FIGHTING TO STAY RELEVANT IN TOUGH SEC

Ole Miss will not play in a bowl game in 2017. This much we already know. The Rebels are operating under a self-imposed bowl ban this season, announced in February after the school received a second Notice of Allegations from the NCAA. The four-year-plus investigation has taken more than its fair share of twists and turns, and Ole Miss likely will not know the full extent of its punishment until some point this fall.

The allegations are serious, including that boosters paid a recruit, other recruits received illegal inducements, a former staff member lied to the NCAA and that Ole Miss lacked institutional control. Coach Hugh Freeze is also under fire, with the NCAA alleging he violated its fairly new legislation putting head coaches squarely responsible for what happens in their program.

So no matter what happens this season — how many games the Rebels win, how many yards Shea Patterson throws for, how much better the defense is than it was in 2016 — we know the Egg Bowl against rival Mississippi State on Thanksgiving is the closest this Ole Miss team will come to a bowl game.

It'll be the second straight year Ole Miss will not participate in a bowl game, after the 2016 Rebels cratered with blowout losses to Vanderbilt and Mississippi State to end the season at 5-7 overall.

It's not so long ago, less than two years in fact, that Ole Miss was ending the season with a Sugar Bowl win against Oklahoma State that it thought signaled its arrival as one of the top programs in the Southeastern Conference.

So much has gone wrong since then, most of it centered around the NCAA investigation, but also including Chad Kelly's injury that cost him the final three games of last season and a wildly underperforming defense that sent coordinator Dave Wommack into retirement.

It's made Ole Miss into one of the more interesting stories heading into this college football season, if for all the wrong reasons. While Freeze is trying to fight to keep the program relevant in the SEC, behind the scenes he and the rest of the administration are trying to avoid the kind of program-altering sanctions that would make that all but impossible for some time.

"Growing up in Tate County, you're dreaming about a job like this. ... This is certainly not a part of the dream," Freeze said. "I never thought I'd go through anything like this."

OFFENSE

Freeze was an offensive coach during his rise to Ole Miss, and he retained a significant amount of control of the offense throughout his first five seasons in Oxford. But after the 2016 offense struggled to move the ball in key situations and run the ball with any regularity (although it did still finish fourth in the SEC in scoring, at 32.6 points per game), co-offensive coordinator Dan Werner was fired and replaced by Phil Longo.

Longo is a new name to FBS, a grinder whose Air Raid-style offense scored all kinds of points at various lower levels of college football, most recently at FCS Sam Houston State. It's his offense that Ole Miss is now running, which is a significant change.

They're promising a downhill running game after Ole Miss spent years largely as a run-pass option attack or, before that, a zone-read team. Jordan Wilkins is the beneficiary of that, and at 6-1, 215 pounds, the redshirt senior has the body for that style of ground game. But he's never truly been the team's No. 1 back, so he'll have to finally come into his own in 2017.

There's not much after Wilkins, especially if Eric Swinney (injured for almost all of the last two years) is not ready to start the season.

Longo has a terrific young quarterback to build his offense around. Sophomore Shea Patterson had a three-game audition at the end of 2016, and that was enough to see the former No. 1 recruit's immense talent. He can run the ball, but Ole Miss' offense will probably be at its best when he's being asked to throw to a large group of talented receivers.

A.J. Brown is a physical beast — he made one of the team's starting corners look like a practice team guy on a 76-yard touchdown in the spring game. D.K. Metcalf had two touch-

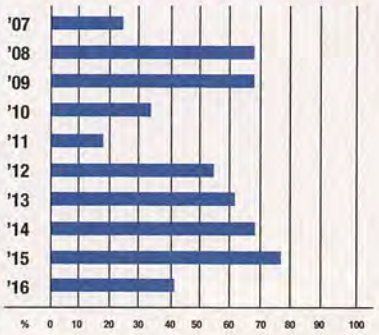
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	SOUTH ALABAMA	6-7
Sept. 9	UT MARTIN	7-5
Sept. 16	at California	5-7
Sept. 30	at Alabama	14-1
Oct. 7	at Auburn	8-5
Oct. 14	VANDERBILT	6-7
Oct. 21	LSU	8-4
Oct. 28	ARKANSAS	7-6
Nov. 4	at Kentucky	7-6
Nov. 11	LOUISIANA	6-7
Nov. 18	TEXAS A&M	8-5
Nov. 23	at Mississippi State	6-7

RESULTS

5-7, 2-6		
L	vs. Florida State (Orlando, FL)	34-45
W	WOFFORD	38-13
L	ALABAMA	43-48
W	GEORGIA	45-14
W	MEMPHIS	48-28
L	at Arkansas	30-34
L	at LSU	21-38
L	AUBURN	29-40
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	37-27
W	at Texas A&M	29-28
L	at Vanderbilt	17-38
L	MISSISSIPPI STATE	20-55

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Oxford, Miss.

2016:
5-7 overall, 2-6 SEC (7th, West)

COACH:
Hugh Freeze — At Ole Miss: 39-25, 5 years; overall: 69-32, 8 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
13; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Shea Patterson, WR Van Jefferson, WR A.J. Brown, WR D.K. Metcalf, OT Greg Little, DE Marquis Haynes, DT Breeland Speaks, DT Benito Jones

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Ole Miss has never struggled to score points under Freeze; even with a new offense there's enough at quarterback and receiver to suggest that will not change anytime soon. The offensive line could be the best the Rebels have had in the last six years. The defensive line will push the line of scrimmage and create havoc plays in the backfield. The Rebels will also be good on special teams.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Ole Miss' defense was nothing short of awful in 2016, and there was no infusion of talent to fix the problem. Ole Miss is also depending on its scheme change on offense to fix the years-long problem at running back, because it missed out on its top recruit.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Chad Kelly, TE Evan Engram, WR Damor'ea Stringfellow, WR Quincy Adeboyejo, DT D.J. Jones, DT Issac Gross, DE Fadol Brown, DB Tony Conner

OVERVIEW:
Ole Miss, in a short time, has gone from a program on the rise to one that is trying to avoid the fall. The Rebels will miss a bowl game for the second straight year because of a self-imposed bowl ban, and they had to replace both coordinators after a 5-7 2016. There's no denying there's talent on this team, but there are also significant holes that recruiting has yet to fix.

KEY NUMBER:
30 The ranking for Ole Miss' 2017 recruiting class, according to the 247Sports Composite. That's 25 spots below where it was in 2016, and it marks the worst-ranked class at Ole Miss since Hugh Freeze's first season in 2012.

DE
Marquis
HAYNES

Photo by Richey Miller/CSM via AP Images

LT

Greg Little

Photo by Richey Miller/CSM via AP Images

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Shea Patterson	So.	Big arm, dual-threat. Potential future star.	Jordan Ta'amu, Jr.
RB	Jordan Wilkins	Sr.	Always a depth back, suddenly has to be No. 1.	Eric Swinney, So.
WR	A.J. Brown	So.	Freaky athlete with incredible strength for a receiver.	Markell Pack, Sr.
WR	D.K. Metcalf	So.	Red zone threat who has great ball skills.	DaMarkus Lodge, Jr.
WR	**Van Jefferson***	So.	Leading returning receiver out of the slot.	Tre' Nixon, Fr.
TE	Dawson Knox	So.	Walk-on is threatening to steal the job.	Octavious Cooley, So.
LT	Greg Little	So.	Impressive base; can be dominant pass-blocker.	Royce Newman, Fr.
LG	**Javon Patterson***	Jr.	Team leader; can also slide over to center.	Jack DeFoor, Fr.
C	**Sean Rawlings***	Jr.	Former tackle could flourish into All-SEC player.	Eli Johnson, Fr.
RG	**Jordan Sims***	Jr.	Moves well for his size, especially after weight loss.	Daronte Bouldin, Sr.
RT	**Rod Taylor***	Sr.	Can the former top recruit finally fulfill his potential?	Alex Givens, So.
PK	**Gary Wunderlich***	Sr.	Nation's most accurate kicker can do it again.	Luke Logan, Fr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	**Marquis Haynes***	Sr.	Has 24.5 career sacks; could have 10 this year.	Markel Winters, Jr.
DT	Benito Jones	So.	Physical defender who pops on the film.	Austrian Robinson, So.
DT	**Breeland Speaks***	Jr.	Disappointed in 2016 but still has lots of potential.	Garrald McDowell, Jr.
DE	Qaadir Sheppard	So.	Syracuse transfer can be strongside end.	Victor Evans, Jr.
LB	**DeMarquis Gates***	Sr.	Highest-ceiling linebacker on the roster right now.	Josh Clarke, Fr.
LB	Detric Bing-Dukes	Jr.	A run-plugger who has to get better in coverage.	Brenden Williams, So.
CB	Jaylon Jones	So.	Five pass-breakups as a reserve last season.	Cam Ordway, Jr.
CB	**Jalen Julius***	So.	Ex-return specialist has best top-end speed on the roster.	**Myles Hartsfield, So.***
CB	A.J. Moore	Sr.	Nothing spectacular, but solid in nickel corner role.	Breon Dixon, Fr.
S	Deontay Anderson	So.	Made 32 tackles with an interception as true freshman.	C.J. Moore, Jr.
S	**Zedrick Woods***	Jr.	Afterthought recruit has turned into a big surprise.	Armani Linton, So.
P	**Will Gleeson***	Sr.	Little boom-or-bust, but has some really long punts.	Gary Wunderlich, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

downs in as many games in 2016 before a broken foot cost him the rest of the year; he's back, and was a standout in the spring.

And Van Jefferson is actually the team's leading returning receiver, catching 49 passes, three for touchdowns, as a freshman.

Seven players with starting experience are back up front, and this is probably the most athletic and deep offensive line Ole Miss has had during the Freeze era.

Much is expected of sophomore left tackle Greg Little, a former top recruit. But center Sean Rawlings is really good, and right guard Jordan Sims is not far behind him. Rod Taylor has never really broken through and delivered on his promise, but there are signs the senior will do so at right tackle in 2017.

DEFENSE

Wesley McGriff was at Ole Miss to start the program resurgence with Freeze, and after stints with the New Orleans Saints and Auburn, McGriff is back, this time as the defensive coordinator. He inherits a group that was last in the SEC in points allowed and 12th in yards per play (6.18). So, not great.

While there was talk of McGriff moving the team to a 4-3 look, that'll probably only be an occasional thing. Like most teams, the 4-2-5 nickel look is the preferred base defense. It helps defend multiple receivers and — this is not insignificant — Ole Miss had major linebacker issues in 2016. What good would putting another one of them on the field do?

DeMarquis Gates had a really good 2015 season as a sophomore but fell off as a junior and was in-and-out of the lineup. He's the most athletic guy the Rebels have, so he has to be good. Detric Bing-Dukes shows up, but he's a classic run-stuffer who has struggled outside of the box. There's opportunity for a freshman like Josh Clarke to show up in fall camp and make the lineup.

Defensive line is not really an issue; that's where almost all of the star potential on this side of the ball lies. Marquis Haynes could have gone to the NFL, but the defensive end (seven sacks in 2016, 24.5 for his career) chose to come back. He's a pass-rushing end that has gotten better as a run-defender.

Tackle Breeland Speaks is another guy who underperformed expectations last year, but coaches liked what they saw out of him in the spring (including a weight gain, back up to nearly 300 pounds). Everyone loves Benito Jones, a sophomore with a strong motor and the desire to be great.

Ole Miss lost its best cornerback,

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Marquis Haynes OLB 6-2 222 4.67 Sr.

Haynes is listed as a defensive end by the Rebels but has often lined up as a stand-up rusher and his relatively narrow frame suggests a move to linebacker in the NFL.

While his future position may be in question, Haynes' initial burst and body control in avoiding blockers on his way to the quarterback certainly is not. He enters his senior campaign ranked third in school history with 24.5 career sacks, including seven last year, a slight drop from a breakout 2015 campaign in which he recorded a career-high 10 sacks while opponents focused on future first round pick Robert Nkemdiche.

The Rebels do a nice job of scheming for Haynes, incorporating twists and stunts and alternately featuring him off the left and right sides to create opportunities. He is a slippery rusher with enough length, core strength and aggression to fight through the mass of humanity along the line of scrimmage to wreak havoc.

Once blockers latch on, however, he struggles to separate.

2. Zedrick Woods	SS	5-11	197	4.58	Jr.
3. Jordan Sims	OG	6-3	334	5.37	rJr.
4. C.J. Hampton	FS	6-0	186	4.54	Sr.
5. Gary Wunderlich	K	6-0	193	4.87	Sr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

Ken Webster, in the first game of 2016; if he can come back this fall, that'd be great news. If not, Jaylon Jones may be the team's top cornerback. Myles Hartsfield impressed coaches in the spring after moving from safety. Jalen Julius was also with the No. 1 defense until he fractured his arm; he has some of the best speed on the team. Again, a freshman could play early here; four-star prospect D.D. Bowie is confident enough.

McGriff coaches the secondary and has specifically coached cornerbacks throughout his career. He values guys who are not afraid to make plays while taking the risk of occasionally getting beat.

A.J. Moore looks like a solid fit in the middle as the team's nickel corner, and Zedrick Woods has his name penciled in at one safety spot. That leaves one more position in the secondary, with lots of competition for it.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Gary Wunderlich has been the team's kicker since his arrival in 2014. Now a senior, he made 22 of 23 field goal tries in 2016, making him the most accurate kicker in the country and an All-American by some. It helped him that Freeze tends to go for it on fourth down (half of the kicks were within 29 yards), but Wunderlich made three kicks in the 40-yard range, including a long of 49 yards.

Wunderlich will also punt quite a bit, serving as the hang-time option in a platoon with Will Gleeson. The latter is a former Australian rules football player who punts rugby-style. Five of his punts went at least 50 yards; he averaged 44.1 yards on his 28 punts.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Ole Miss opens at home with South Alabama and UT-Martin before going on the road to Cal (5-7 in 2016), so the possibility is very high that the Rebels start the season 3-0 and have a bye week before going to Alabama on Sept. 30.

That starts the toughest stretch in the schedule, including a road game the next week at Auburn and home games against Vanderbilt, LSU and Arkansas before ending with a road game at Kentucky.

Texas A&M comes to Oxford in November, and then there's a short week before the Thanksgiving Egg Bowl date with Mississippi State. There have been worse schedules — this one is particularly light in the non-conference and Ole Miss avoids the SEC East powers — but there's no such thing as an easy one in the SEC.

— Hugh Kellenberger

WR
Van Jefferson
Photo by RD Moore

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.3	76
Rushing	155.5	73
Passing	263.6	37
Total	419.1	51

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.0	1
Rushing	136.9	29
Passing	192.1	16
Total	329.0	13

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 7	+ 0.5	T-27

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	40.8	8
Rushing	183.1	45
Passing	334.7	10
Total	517.8	10

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.6	33
Rushing	127.1	23
Passing	258.8	104
Total	385.8	54

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 0	+ 0.00	T-66

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.6	42
Rushing	149.4	95
Passing	314.9	13
Total	464.3	26

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.0	100
Rushing	246.3	120
Passing	214.9	48
Total	461.3	111

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 3	- 0.25	T-85

NOTEBOOK

Sixth-year Ole Miss coach **Hugh Freeze** really loved the fact that for four years he only had two assistant coaches leave Oxford — one to the NFL (**Wesley McGriff**) and another (**Tom Allen**) to be a defensive coordinator.

But after failing to make a bowl game for the first time since he took over before the 2012 season, Freeze made changes beyond both coordinator positions. Defensive line coach **Chris Kiffin** joined his brother at Florida Atlantic, and he took safeties coach **Corey Batoon** with him. Allen was named the head coach at Indiana, and he hired wide receivers coach **Grant Heard**.

The key in all the resulting hires was a proven ability to recruit, from linebackers coach **Bradley Dale Peveto** in Louisiana and Florida, to **Jacob Peeler's** connections in Mississippi and California (he was previously at Cal). And **Freddie Roach** is a young coach who'll take over the defensive line.

• **Jason Pellerin** came to Ole Miss to play quarterback, and did so for two seasons as a backup to **Chad Kelly**. But with **Shea Patterson** taking over, Pellerin is moving elsewhere on the field.

The initial idea was to shift Pellerin to tight end; he's 6-4, 230 pounds and athletic. But as spring went on, Pellerin started looking more like a slot receiver than a tight end in most formations. He's not the first tight end at Ole Miss to play that way. **Evan Engram** did so for four years and developed into an NFL player doing it.

• Few recruits in the country had as chaotic a last few weeks before Signing Day as **Isaiah Woullard.** Mississippi's career leading rusher at private school Presbyterian Christian School in Hattiesburg lost his family home to a tornado on Jan. 21, and did not have a committable offer to his name.

But he visited Ole Miss, which really needed to sign a running back in this class. The night before Signing Day, Freeze called Woullard and offered him that scholarship. Woullard immediately accepted.

"It was awesome," Woullard said. "He called, and he said, 'Hey man, it's going to happen.' ... I couldn't hold it in. It was indescribable."

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the team:** "A hallmark of a Hugh Freeze team is to start fast and peter out. They beat Alabama two years in a row, then messed it up down the stretch. But Hugh's a good dude. They've had an explosive offense and adequate defense. That train is pulling in for a bunch of repairs this year."

• **On recruiting:** "They got some high profile prospects (a few years ago), but I don't know how they've recruited on the second level. I label everything 'A-B-C and misses.' If they didn't get the A recruit, they go to Cs and misses. If Alabama doesn't get the A, they get the B and every now and then take the C.'

• **On QB Shea Patterson:** "Patterson gives them a shot in the arm. He's very talented. He's a cleaner version of Johnny (Manziel), but I don't know if he's got the surrounding cast Johnny had."

REBELS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
16 Graham Lindman	QB	6-4	220	Jr.	Noblesville, IN
20 Shea Patterson	QB	6-2	200	So.	Shreveport, LA
7 Jason Pellerin	QB	6-4	235	So.	New Iberia, LA
13 Grant Restmeyer	QB	6-4	221	Fr.	McKinney, TX
10 Jordan Ta'amu	QB	6-2	200	Jr.	Pearl City, HI
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
23 Eugene Brazley	RB	5-9	192	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
25 D.K. Buford	RB	5-11	223	Jr.	Oxford
28 D'Vaughn Pennamon	RB	5-11	223	So.	Houston, TX
24 Eric Swinney	RB	5-9	210	So.	Riverdale, GA
22 Jordan Wilkins	RB	6-1	210	Sr.	Cordova, TN
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
81 Trey Bledsoe	WR	6-1	205	Sr.	Grenada
1 A.J. Brown	WR	6-1	225	So.	Starkville
82 Jared Farlow	WR	6-0	188	Fr.	Grantville, GA
12 Van Jefferson	WR	6-2	192	So.	Brentwood, TN
5 DaMarkus Lodge	WR	6-2	190	Jr.	Cedar Hill, TX
27 Cale Luke	WR	6-1	199	Sr.	Clinton
14 D.K. Metcalf	WR	6-4	210	So.	Oxford
4 Tré Nixon	WR	6-1	170	Fr.	Viera, FL
11 Markell Pack	WR	6-2	184	Sr.	Purvis
86 Walker Rynd	WR	6-3	175	Fr.	Fort Worth, TX
85 Alex Weber	WR	6-1	180	Jr.	Lake City, FL
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
83 Gabe Angel	TE	6-3	238	Fr.	Lebanon, TN
15 Octavious Cooley	TE	6-3	246	So.	Laurel
85 Dawson Knox	TE	6-4	243	So.	Nashville, TN
16 Jacob Mathis	TE	6-4	233	Fr.	Tampa, FL
43 Ty Quick	TE	6-3	257	Sr.	Terry
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
76 Daronte Bouldin	OL	6-5	318	Sr.	Canton
54 Jack DeFoor	OL	6-5	281	Fr.	Calhoun, GA
67 Alex Givens	OL	6-6	297	So.	Nashville, TN
52 Michael Howard	OL	6-5	250	So.	Green Cove Springs, FL
54 Sam Johnson	OL	6-1	268	So.	Nashville, TN
61 Eli Johnson	C	6-1	289	Fr.	Taylor
74 Greg Little	OL	6-6	332	So.	Allen, TX
71 Bryce Mathews	OL	6-6	275	Fr.	Brentwood, TN
72 Royce Newman	OL	6-5	284	Fr.	Nashville, IL
79 Javon Patterson	OL	6-3	307	Jr.	Petal
55 Tyler Putman	OL	6-4	308	Jr.	Olive Branch
50 Sean Rawlings	OL	6-5	286	Jr.	Madison
70 Jordan Sims	OL	6-4	323	Jr.	Homewood, AL
73 Rod Taylor	OL	6-3	329	Sr.	Jackson
68 Chandler Tuitt	OL	6-4	301	Fr.	Fayetteville, GA
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
89 Ryder Anderson	DE	6-6	231	Fr.	Katy, TX
40 Josiah Coatney	DL	6-4	293	So.	Douglasville, GA
34 Shawn Curtis	DE	6-2	250	So.	Doral, FL
90 Ross Donelly	DT	6-1	306	Jr.	Houston, TX
14 Victor Evans	DE	6-3	240	Jr.	Dallas, TX
87 D.J. Forté	DL	6-2	266	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
10 Marquis Haynes	DE	6-3	222	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
96 Jordan Hebert	DT	5-11	291	Jr.	Klein, TX
95 Benito Jones	DT	6-2	308	So.	Waynesboro
42 Garrald McDowell	DE	6-2	261	Jr.	Covington, LA
99 Herbert Moore	DT	6-1	318	Sr.	Memphis, TN
88 Ty Reyes	DE	6-1	248	Fr.	Marietta, GA
52 Austrian Robinson	DT	6-4	280	So.	New York, NY
97 Qaadir Sheppard	DE	6-3	254	So.	Bronx, NY
9 Breeland Speaks	DT	6-3	290	Jr.	Jackson
98 Charles Wiley	DE	6-2	253	Fr.	Stockbridge, GA
19 Markel Winters	DE	6-3	260	Jr.	Tallahassee, FL
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
44 Alex Ashlock	LB	6-1	212	Sr.	Cordova, TN
43 Detric Bing-Dukes	LB	6-1	247	Jr.	Tucker, GA
35 Donta Evans	LB	6-1	228	Fr.	Lawrenceville, GA
3 DeMarquis Gates	LB	6-2	211	Sr.	Hampton, GA
17 Willie Hibbler	LB	6-3	231	So.	Sardis
80 Elliot Markuson	LB	6-0	222	Sr.	Oxford
24 Tayler Polk	LB	5-11	212	Sr.	Magee
48 Jack Raborn	LB	6-1	220	Jr.	Advance, NC
33 John-Patrick Sherling	LB	5-11	221	Sr.	Fairhope, AL
22 Ray Ray Smith	LB	6-2	216	Sr.	Florence, AL
41 Brenden Williams	LB	6-3	224	So.	Fairfield, AL
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
2 Deontay Anderson	DB	6-1	211	So.	Houston, TX
25 Montrell Custis	DB	6-0	175	So.	Jonesboro, GA
23 Breon Dixon	DB	5-11	218	Fr.	Loganville, GA
39 Kweisi Fountain	DB	6-1	195	Sr.	Biloxi
21 Javien Hamilton	DB	5-10	170	Jr.	Bay Springs
4 C.J. Hampton	DB	6-0	186	Sr.	Meridian
15 Myles Hartsfield	DB	5-11	199	So.	Sayreville, NJ
31 Jaylon Jones	DB	5-11	177	So.	Dallas, TX
7 Jalen Julius	DB	5-10	180	So.	Winter Garden, FL
29 Armani Linton	DB	6-2	215	So.	Walnut
30 A.J. Moore	DB	5-11	199	Sr.	Bassfield
26 C.J. Moore	DB	5-11	193	Jr.	Bassfield
28 Cam Ordway	DB	5-11	184	Jr.	Pulaski, TN
20 Jarrion Street	DB	6-2	202	So.	Trussville, AL
5 Ken Webster	DB	5-11	195	Sr.	Decatur, GA
36 Zedrick Woods	DB	5-11	203	Jr.	Lake City, FL
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
96 Mac Brown	P	6-3	186	Fr.	Eden Prairie, MN
62 Kamden Darney	LS	6-1	227	So.	Upland, CA
94 Will Gleeson	P	6-3	189	Sr.	Melbourne, Australia
57 Chadwick Lamar	LS	6-1	206	Jr.	Oxford
92 Luke Logan	K	5-11	189	Fr.	Hattiesburg
90 Jack Propst	LS	5-11	200	Fr.	Brentwood, TN
58 Mike Taylor	LS	6-1	181	So.	Jackson, TN
95 Isaac Way	K	5-9	164	Fr.	Franklin, TN
97 Gary Wunderlich	K/P	6-0	193	Sr.	Memphis, TN

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
C. Kelly	9	147.4	205	328	8	62.5	2758	19	63	306.4
S. Patterson	3	121.0	72	132	3	54.5	880	6	40	293.3

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
E. Engram	11	65	926	14.2	8	63	84.2
V. Jefferson	12	49	543	11.1	3	44	45.2
D. Stringfellow	12	46	716	15.6	6	50	59.7

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Judd	12	164	828	2	826	5.0	6	53	68.8
C. Kelly	9	81	434	102	332	4.1	5	41	36.9
E. Brazley	12	61	269	8	261	4.3	2	32	21.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Gates 79, Z. Woods 63, M. Haynes 53
Tackles for loss: M. Haynes 11, F. Brown 6, D. Gates 5.5
Sacks: M. Haynes 7, D. Gates 4, F. Brown 2.5
Interceptions: Z. Woods 3, D. Jones 2, three tied with 1

247SPORTS REBELS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

D.D. Bowie, WR

The 6-1, 187-pound Bowie was selected as an Army All-American during his senior season. It was the four-star recruit's blazing speed and explosive cuts that helped him earn such an honor. Look for Bowie to find his way on the field in some capacity this fall.

Breon Dixon, LB

Though a bit undersized at 5-11, 200-pounds, Dixon is a playmaker on the defensive side of the ball. The four-star recruit could play a bit of a hybrid safety/outside linebacker role to utilize his versatility. At the very least, Dixon should be a special teams demon during his first fall in Oxford.

Markel Winters DE

Originally from Florida, Winters redshirted one season at ECU before transferring to Jones County Junior College where he ranked second among all Jhco players with 16 sacks last season. If he recovers from a spring shoulder surgery, he should factor into the defensive line rotation this fall.

SLEEPER

Brenden Williams, LB

Ole Miss has a need at linebacker and after enrolling early to go through spring drills, this three-star recruit looks ready to fill the void this fall. Williams stands 6-3, 232 pounds and is ready for the physical demands of the SEC.

2018 NEEDS

The position Ole Miss needs to hit on in 2017 is linebacker. The Rebels need to add depth and talent to the position that is lacking at the moment. Ole Miss has done a solid job on the recruiting trail at every other position in recent classes, making linebacker a position of need for the Rebels.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	4	17	1
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	22
Average Stars	3.14
Total Stars	69
National Rank: 30	SEC: 12

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Ryder Anderson	DE	6-6	231	✪✪✪	Katy, TX	Katy
Ranked No. 71 weakside defensive end nationally by 247Sports.com… As a junior, helped team to 16-0 season and a state championship.						
Zikerrion Baker	LB	6-1	212	✪✪✪	Mooringsport, LA	Minden
247Sports.com rated No. 57 player in Louisiana… Two-time All-State… Helped team to state championship game as a senior… Had 81 tackles, including 13 tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks and six fumbles caused… As a junior, had 103 tackles and five quarterback sacks.						
D.D. Bowie	DB	6-1	187	✪✪✪✪	Morton	Morton
Ranked No. 20 wide receiver nationally and No. 3 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… All-State… Had 6,857 career all-purpose yards, including 3,132 yards rushing and 1,955 yards receiving… As a senior, had 2,239 yards rushing and 38 touchdowns… Completed 28 of 53 passes for 557 yards and six touchdowns with three interceptions.						
Ben Brown	OL	6-5	300	✪✪✪	Vicksburg	St. Aloysius
247Sports.com rated No. 17 player in Mississippi… All-State… Had 37 tackles, one quarterback sack and one fumble recovered as a senior… Helped team gain 2,596 total rushing yards, averaging 7.2 yards per carry.						
Josh Clarke	LB	6-2	217	✪✪✪	Jefferson, LA	Riverdale
Ranked No. 20 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 118 tackles, including 10 tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks, one interception and three fumbles caused… Had 149 tackles, 18 quarterback sacks, six fumbles caused and six interceptions as a junior.						
Sincere David	DT	6-3	300	✪✪✪	Jacksonville, FL	Sandalwood
247Sports rated No. 75 defensive tackle nationally… All-State… Helped team to state playoffs in three of four seasons.						
Breon Dixon	LB	5-11	200	✪✪✪✪	Loganville, GA	Grayson
Ranked No. 12 inside linebacker nationally by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Helped team to 14-1 record and state championship as a senior… Had 64 tackles, 12 quarterback sacks, two interceptions and more than 20 tackles for loss… As a junior, had 12 quarterback sacks and four interceptions.						
Alex Faniel	QB	6-6	238	✪✪✪	Glen Allen, VA	Glen Allen
247Sports.com rated No. 29 player in Virginia… As a senior, completed 72 of 119 passes for 1,475 yards and 14 touchdowns despite missing part of the season due to injury… Had 312 yards rushing and four touchdowns… Completed 70 percent of passes for 1,147 yards as a junior.						
Chester Graves	LB	6-3	226	✪✪✪✪	Kansas City, MO	Park Hill
Ranked No. 16 weakside defensive end nationally by 247Sports.com… Three-time All-State… Had 126 tackles, including 25 tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks, and three fumbles caused as a senior… As a junior, had 42 tackles for loss.						
Tony Gray	OL	6-5	300	✪✪✪	Loganville, GA	Grayson
247Sports.com rated No. 44 player in Georgia… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Two-time All-State… As a senior, helped team to 14-1 record and state championship.						
Javien Hamilton	DB	5-10	170	✪✪✪	Bay Springs	Jones County J.C.
Had 27 tackles and one fumble caused as a sophomore…As a freshman, averaged 23.3 yards per kick return… Had 22 tackles.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
A.J. Harris	DB	5-11	191	✪✪✪	Madison, AL	Bob Jones
247Sports.com rated No. 35 safety nationally and No. 27 player in Alabama… As a senior, had 73 tackles, four interceptions and eight passes broken up… Had more than 600 yards on offense… All-State as a junior… Had 58 tackles, seven interceptions and 20 passes broken up.						
C.J. Miller	DB	6-1	188	✪✪✪	Powder Springs, GA	McEachern
Ranked No. 79 safety nationally by 247Sports.com… Returned an interception 97 yards for a touchdown as a junior.						
JaVonta Payton	WR	6-1	170	✪✪✪	Nashville, TN	Hillsboro
Ranked No. 85 wide receiver nationally and No. 19 player in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 22 receptions for 386 yards and six touchdowns… Had 526 yards rushing and six touchdowns… Had 331 total yards and five touchdowns as a junior.						
Tae-kion Reed	DL	6-4	298	✪✪✪	Columbus	New Hope
247Sports.com rated No. 29 player in Mississippi… Played both offensive and defensive line.						
Braylon Sanders	WR	6-0	172	✪✪✪	Hogansville, GA	Callaway
Ranked No. 49 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Had more than 1,000 yards receiving and scored 20 touchdowns as a senior.						
Mohamed Sanogo	LB	6-1	235	✪✪✪	Plano, TX	Plano West
247Sports.com rated No. 55 player in Texas… Played in Offense-Defense All-American Game… As a junior, had 110 tackles and two quarterback sacks.						
Jordan Ta'amu	QB	6-2	200	✪✪✪	Pearl City, HI	New Mexico Military
Had 3,014 yards passing and 32 touchdowns as a sophomore… Ranked No. 3 by NJCAA with 334.9 passing yards per game and No. 2 in touchdowns… Had 328 yards rushing and seven touchdowns… As a prep senior, had 1,779 yards passing and 29 touchdowns with four interceptions… Had 392 yards rushing and two touchdowns.						
Kam'ron White	DB	6-2	201	✪✪✪	Clinton	Clinton
Ranked No. 9 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… All-State… As a senior, helped team to 14-1 record and state championship… Had 51 tackles and six interceptions… Had 31 receptions for 522 yards and six touchdowns.						
Brenden Williams	LB	6-3	232	✪✪✪	Fairfield, AL	Northeast Mississippi C.C.
Ranked No. 5 junior college inside linebacker and No. 62 player nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 89 tackles as a freshman.						
Markel Winters	DE	6-3	260	✪✪✪✪	Tallahassee, FL	Jones County J.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 4 junior college weakside defensive end and No. 44 player nationally… As a sophomore, had 16 quarterback sacks and 5.5 tackles for loss… Had 33 tackles, five quarterback sacks and two fumbles recovered as a freshman… Originally signed with East Carolina in 2014 where he redshirted.						
Isaiah Woullard	RB	5-9	195	✪✪	Hattiesburg	Presbyterian Christian School
Ranked No. 48 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… Two-time All-State… Set Mississippi high school record with 8,294 career rushing yards… Had 2,761 yards rushing and 36 touchdowns as a senior… As a junior, had 3,085 yards rushing and 30 touchdowns.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Patterson Ahead of Schedule in his Second Year

There was a plan. Chad Kelly would be Ole Miss' starting quarterback, and one of the best in the SEC. Rather than sit him at various points of last season in order to give Shea Patterson some small dose of playing time, Patterson would just redshirt.

It was all working out just fine as the season hit the final stretch.

But then Kelly suffered a season-ending injury, and Ole Miss, with a 4-5 record, needed a quarterback to have any chance at winning its final three games. Enter Patterson, the former top-ranked quarterback recruit in the nation.

In his first game, he led the Rebels to a surprising upset at Texas A&M. Even though Ole Miss lost the next two games, Patterson could not really be blamed. He finished 72 of 132 passing for 880 yards, with six touchdowns and three interceptions. He rushed for 169 yards.

The benefit of all of this is that Ole Miss enters 2017 knowing that Patterson can get the job done, and he goes into his first full year as the starter with three games worth of experience. If Patterson is anywhere near the quarterback everyone expects him to be, he was unlikely to stay a full five years anyway.

"I thought he was really efficient and that gives people around him confidence," coach Hugh Freeze said.

"The experience of playing in this league those three games and these 15 (spring) practices, it makes him feel better about understanding where the ball needs to go, when it needs to come out, timing of things, which will allow him to play faster."

New offensive coordinator Phil Longo's Air Raid offense does fit Patterson's skill set; he has a strong arm, and his accuracy is very good for a young player. He also has a good feel for the game, which he'll need in Longo's read-and-react scheme.

QB
Shea Patterson
Photo by Austin McAfee/CSM via AP Images

Ole Miss went the junior college route for its last two quarterbacks, but its first high school quarterback-turned-Rebel starter in years gives them a great shot at scoring with most opponents this season.

"It's awesome. The guys around me in my class helped me through that as well," Patterson said. "They keep me positive. We all keep each other positive and we're all going through the same thing as well. The biggest thing for us is we're staying positive."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/olemiss

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

DE MARQUIS HAYNES

Passed up a chance at the NFL to return for his senior season, Haynes has 24.5 career sacks. ... He's led the Rebels in that category in each of his three seasons on campus, including with seven sacks in 2016. ... He is two behind Greg Hardy for the career record at Ole Miss. ... He's still very much a speed-rush defensive end, but he's improved as a run-defender during his career. ... Also needs to be a leader this fall.

EMERGING STAR

WR A.J. BROWN

Brown finished fifth among the Rebels in receiving as a true freshman in 2016, catching 29 passes for 412 yards and two touchdowns. ... Has drawn comparisons to former Ole Miss star Laquon Treadwell since high school because of similar body frames, but Brown showed a willingness to run tough inside routes sooner than Treadwell did. ... His 76-yard TD in the Grove Bowl was a thing of beauty, including the escape from the defender. ... Will likely be the team's top outside receiver this fall.

TOP NEWCOMER

DB D.D. BOWIE

An in-state standout from Morton High School, Bowie ended up sticking to his original commitment and signed with Ole Miss to headline the class of 2017. ... He played everywhere at his high school, including quarterback. Most pegged him as a receiver in college, but he said he sees a better chance to play early at cornerback. ... Given the weakness of the position, Bowie has a chance to crack the two-deep early.

FAMILY FARMS.
FAMILY QUALITY.

MARY QUITMAN HOLMES
2017 Alabama
Catfish Farmer of the Year

GLEN FLEMING
2017 Arkansas
Catfish Farmer of the Year

CHRIS AND MISSY MCGLAWN
2017 Mississippi
Catfish Farming Couple of the Year

U.S. FARM-RAISED
Catfish
100% AMERICAN

When you look for the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish seal, you're looking out for your family, and for our American farmers. Their pure, freshwater ponds and strict standards ensure U.S. Catfish is the freshest, healthiest fish available. And you can rely on that perfectly mild flavor year-round. Try the recipe for Pistachio Crunch Catfish with Mango Salsa at **USCATFISH.COM**.

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

For more coverage of the Bulldogs, visit mississippistate.247Sports.com

CO-OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Billy Gonzales, John Hevesy **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Todd Grantham **STADIUM:** Davis-Wade Stadium: 55,082

BULLDOGS LOOK TO BUILD OFF LAST SEASON'S FINISH

In a clear sign of stability for Mississippi State, Dan Mullen, entering his ninth season with the team, received a five-year contract extension just before the start of spring practice.

But that's not to say everything in Starkville is unchanging these days.

Todd Grantham is the Bulldogs' fourth defensive coordinator in as many seasons. Grantham, a former defensive coordinator for the Cleveland Browns, arrived from Louisville, where he served as assistant head coach, defensive coordinator and linebackers coach since 2014.

He is tasked with re-establishing MSU's defense. Mississippi State allowed the most passing yards in the SEC at 281.5 yards per game — 31.5 more than any team in the league. The Bulldogs also allowed 31.8 points per game, which ranked 13th in the SEC. At one point during the season, the defense surrendered at least 40 points and 500 yards in four of five games. One of those teams was FCS opponent Samford.

The defense, especially the secondary, which will be led by returning cornerbacks coach Terrell Buckley and new safeties coach Ron English — a former head coach at Eastern Michigan — must perform better in order for MSU to improve on its three SEC wins from 2016.

Mullen often referred to his team as "young" last year amid MSU's struggles. While he was right, age and inexperience will no longer be viable reasons if the team fails, particularly on defense. There are six returning starters on offense and four on defense, but several more players saw plenty of time on the field.

"You know the defense I want to play here with, which is guys flying to the football as hard as they can, trying to go make plays and playing an aggressive style of defense," Mullen said after MSU's spring game. "We want to be aggressive and flying around. I saw some of that out there on the field."

MSU received a lift this spring with the addition of 13 early enrollees. Several of them, including defensive ends/linebackers Montez Sweat and Chauncey Rivers, will be counted on to contribute.

The Bulldogs showed flashes of improvement late in the season with a 55-20 win over Ole Miss in the Egg Bowl that gave MSU a bowl game. Even if the defense needs time to jell under Grantham, the offense should be able to be counted on to do some heavy lifting with dual-threat Nick Fitzgerald back at quarterback.

OFFENSE

Unlike last year, MSU knows exactly who its starting quarterback is heading into the season. Nick Fitzgerald returns as one of the SEC's best, working this spring on becoming a better passer under Mullen and new quarterbacks coach Brett Elliott.

Mullen said he liked what he saw from Fitzgerald this spring as far as making good reads, adding that the quarterback's four intercepted passes in the spring game were not concerning because the squad was split up and several of the targets lacked experience.

One of the main questions heading into the spring was whether early enrolled true freshman Keytaon Thompson would be able to handle the backup role, with walk-on Logan Burnett being the only other option. Thompson erased any concern.

Mullen spoke highly of Thompson's poise from the first day of spring practice. Fitzgerald said Thompson was further along than he was as a freshman.

Many expect Aeris Williams, who played well once he was given an opportunity last season, to be MSU's featured running back. All spring, Williams expressed confidence in his own ability, promising to reporters multiple times that it is going to be difficult to stop him this fall. Williams, a versatile workhorse back, returns as the leading rusher out of the backfield with 720 yards and four touchdowns last season.

Donald Gray, the main vertical threat, assumes Fred Ross' former spot. Gray returns as the team's leading receiver in yards (709), receptions (41) and touchdowns (five). It's unclear who will emerge as the second option.

Coaches and players have complimented the way senior Gabe Myles played this spring. Fitzgerald said sophomore Jamal Couch, who saw playing time as a true freshman, is learning to use his size more, while redshirt freshman

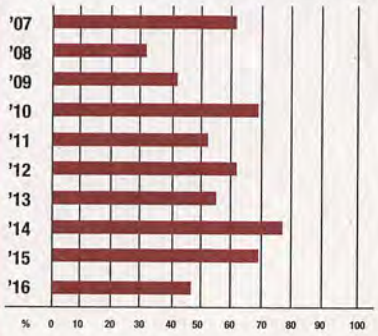
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	7-4
Sept. 9	at Louisiana Tech	9-5
Sept. 16	LSU	8-4
Sept. 23	at Georgia	8-5
Sept. 30	at Auburn	8-5
Oct. 14	BYU	9-4
Oct. 21	KENTUCKY	7-6
Oct. 28	at Texas A&M	8-5
Nov. 4	MASSACHUSETTS	2-10
Nov. 11	ALABAMA	14-1
Nov. 18	at Arkansas	7-6
Nov. 23	OLE MISS	5-7

RESULTS

	6-7, 3-5	
L	SOUTH ALABAMA	20-21
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	27-14
L	at LSU	20-23
W	at Massachusetts	47-35
L	AUBURN	14-38
L	at BYU (2OT)	21-28
L	at Kentucky	38-40
W	SAMFORD	56-41
W	TEXAS A&M	35-28
L	at Alabama	3-51
L	ARKANSAS	42-58
W	at Ole Miss	55-20
	St. Petersburg Bowl	
W	vs. Miami (Ohio)	17-16

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Starkville, Miss.

2016:
6-7 overall, 3-5 SEC (T-5th, West)

COACH:
Dan Mullen — At Mississippi State and overall: 61-42, 8 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
11; 6 offense, 4 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Nick Fitzgerald, RB Aeris Williams, WR Donald Gray, OL Martinas Rankin, DT Jeffery Simmons, LB Leo Lewis, LB Gerri Green, S Brandon Bryant

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Fitzgerald is one of the best quarterbacks in the nation and is coming off one of the top rushing seasons for a quarterback in SEC history. Williams' development as the starter should make the rushing attack more dynamic. The defensive line should be a formidable group, and the linebacking corps should be able to add pressure with Lewis, Green and Dez Harris.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Mississippi State has not named a starting center, and the move will have a trickle-down effect on the other positions. In other words, it is unclear who at least three of the starters will be on the offensive line. The kicking and punting game is a huge area of concern. Another problem is wide receiver because Malik Dear could miss significant time with an ACL tear.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Brandon Holloway, WR Fred Ross, C Jamaal Clayborn, RT Justin Senior, DE A.J. Jefferson, NT Nick James, LB Johnathan Calvin, LB Richie Brown

OVERVIEW:
There is reason to think Mississippi State will be improved in 2017, but a lot depends on the defense under Grantham and how the offensive line shakes out. Fitzgerald may have to carry the team early on and win games late, if the defense isn't up to speed. It's hard moving up in the SEC West, but this should be a competitive team that could surprise.

KEY NUMBER:
13 MSU's number of early enrollees from the 2017 class. It's the highest total in the program history, and several players are expected to contribute early, including junior college transfer safety Johnathan Abram and true freshman backup quarterback Keytaon Thompson.

WR
Donald
GRAY

Photo by AP Photo/Elise Amendola

QB

Nick Fitzgerald

Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Nick Fitzgerald***	Jr.	Will be counted on to be a better passer and leader in Year 2.	Keytaon Thompson, Fr.
RB	Aeris Williams	Jr.	Needs to produce consistently to be the featured guy.	Nick Gibson, So.
WR	**Donald Gray***	Sr.	The only reliable go-to vertical threat after Fred Ross' departure.	Reggie Todd, Fr.
WR	Gabe Myles	Sr.	Must limit his amount of drops from last season.	Jamal Couch, So.
WR	Keith Mixon	So.	Has better grasp of the playbook and improved route running.	Deddrick Thomas, So.
TE	**Farrod Green***	So.	Dan Mullen wants his TEs more involved in the passing game.	Jordan Thomas, Sr.
LT	**Martinas Rankin***	Sr.	Played center during spring game; emerged at LT last season.	Tyre Phillips, Jr.
LG	**Elgton Jenkins***	Jr.	Can play tackle, guard and center, but he was limited this spring.	Michael Story, So.
C	**Deion Calhoun***	Jr.	Has starting experience, but hasn't taken meaningful snaps at C.	Harrison Moon, So.
RG	Darryl Williams	So.	Played in seven games last season after redshirting in 2015.	Michael Story, So.
RT	Greg Eiland	Fr.	Collected rave reviews from teammates and coaches this spring.	Stewart Reese, Fr.
K	Tucker Day	Fr.	MSU needs to improve its 11 of 19 field-goal accuracy from '16.	Logan Cooke, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Fletcher Adams	So.	Needs to generate a pass rush to remain atop the depth chart.	Kobe Jones, Fr.
DT	Jeffery Simmons	So.	Should elevate to next level after earning starts as a true frosh.	Cory Thomas, Jr.
DE	Montez Sweat	Jr.	Likely the biggest contributor out of the 13 early enrollees.	Chauncey Rivers, Jr.
LB	Gerri Green	Jr.	Counted on to be a major part of the pass-rush at OLB.	Marquiss Spencer, So.
LB	**Leo Lewis***	So.	Looking to be an All-American after breaking out as a freshman.	Erroll Thompson, Fr.
LB	Dezmond Harris	Sr.	Is now the vocal leader of the defense at inside linebacker.	Tim Washington, So.
LB	**J.T. Gray***	Sr.	Playing the "star" position; will see coverage chances as a safety.	Cameron Miller, Fr.
CB	Jamal Peters	Jr.	Made an INT in spring game; working on becoming a leader.	Cameron Dantzler, Fr.
CB	**Lashard Durr***	Sr.	Turned heads in the spring; had an INT in the spring game.	Tolando Cleveland, Sr.
SS	**Brandon Bryant***	Jr.	Will be pushed for playing time by junior college transfers.	Jonathan Abram, Jr.
FS	Mark McLaurin	Jr.	Wouldn't surprise to see him surpass his two INTs from last year.	Brian Cole, Jr.
P	Tucker Day	Fr.	As a high school senior, Day averaged 39.3 yards a punt.	**Logan Cooke, Sr.***

***Returning Starter in Bold**

Reggie Todd is looking to polish his technique.

Wide receiver could be MSU's biggest weakness because slot receiver Malik Dear tore his ACL in the spring. Mullen did not know if Dear would be available this season. Keith Mixon would likely start in his place.

Mullen wants his tight ends to be more involved in the offense, but no one has emerged as the front-runner.

The offensive line remains an unknown. Martinas Rankin played center during practices and in the spring game, and Mullen said there is a 50-50 chance he remains there despite emerging at left tackle last year.

Returning starters Deion Calhoun and Elgton Jenkins were limited this spring. Calhoun is a likely candidate at center while Jenkins has the versatility to play guard, tackle or center.

Redshirt freshmen Greg Eiland and Stewart Reese looked promising, per coaches and players, while Darryl Williams is in the mix for a starting spot at right guard.

DEFENSE

When Todd Grantham was introduced as coordinator in February, he said all positions were up for grabs and that the Bulldogs would play "fast, physical and aggressive." Judging from practices, both were true statements. A couple of players have switched positions while the defense is a base 3-4 with multiple fronts.

Look for a lot of mixing and matching in games because Grantham's defense will feature multiple packages designed for specific opposing personnel and situations.

Grantham really wants to generate a fierce pass-rush, which starts up front. Jeffery Simmons has added weight and is now more than 300 pounds; he is looking to make another step forward after his impressive freshman season. Cory Thomas will have an opportunity to also build off last season, when he had 4.5 tackles for a loss.

"From an interior standpoint, we have some big guys who are solid and stout," Grantham said.

At end, Fletcher Adams will have a shot to flourish after seeing time as a true freshman, and former Starkville High standout and redshirt freshman Kobe Jones has stood out in practice. Junior college transfer Chauncey Rivers, an early enrollee, should see plenty of playing time.

Defensive ends and outside linebackers are almost interchangeable in Grantham's system because he sees them as "edge guys." That's why Sweat could line up at either position as a pass-rusher.

Gerri Green will be at outside linebacker. Green is looking to be more of a vocal leader, along with linebackers Dez Harris and Leo Lewis in a group that could end up being the team's strength. Harris and Lewis will work as inside linebackers this season and are a formidable pair. Lewis said he has his sights set on being an All-American. Harris has developed as the defense's vocal leader.

A significant weakness last year, MSU's

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Nick Fitzgerald QB 6-5 230 4.68 Jr.

Replacing a legend is always difficult, but Fitzgerald did more than just an adequate job of replacing Dak Prescott for the Bulldogs last season. He posted eye-popping numbers in his first season as a starter, leading the SEC in total offensive yards (3,798) and rushing touchdowns (16), while tossing 21 touchdown passes against 10 interceptions.

To be clear, Fitzgerald is still quite raw as a passer. He has a tendency to stare down his primary receiver and his mechanics are out of whack, showing sporadic footwork and an elongated delivery. He completed just 54.3 percent of his passes last season, too often sailing throws over the head of open receivers.

Fitzgerald possesses ideal size, however, as well as the arm strength and grit that every team is looking for at the quarterback position.

Given the NFL success of dual-threat passers like Cam Newton (Carolina), Russell Wilson (Seattle), Tyrod Taylor (Buffalo) and, of course, former Bulldogs star Dak Prescott (Dallas), expect Fitzgerald to be among the more heavily scrutinized prospects at any position in the SEC this season.

2. Martinas Rankin	OT	6-5	305	5.26	Sr.
3. Brandon Bryant	FS	6-0	213	4.54	Jr.
4. Mark McLaurin	SS	6-2	215	4.64	Jr.
5. Tolando Cleveland	CB	6-0	194	4.56	Sr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

LB **J.T. Gray**

Photo by Mark Zerof-USA TODAY Sports

secondary could be one of the team's strengths. Depth and experience are two reasons why.

At safety, Johnathan Abram, whose vicious blow ended MSU's spring game with about one minute left, has added physicality and experience to the group, along with fellow junior college transfer Brian Cole, who had a pick-six. Brandon Bryant said he is enjoying football more under new safeties coach Ron English, although the returning starter is getting pushed by the newcomers.

J.T. Gray has moved into more of a safety role and will play the star position, a linebacker/safety hybrid.

MSU has four solid options at cornerback in Jamal Peters, Cameron Dantzler, Lashard Durr and Tolando Cleveland. Dantzler, a redshirt freshman, had two picks in the spring game and may be carving out a large role in the fall.

SPECIAL TEAMS

A glaring worry for Mississippi State is its special teams unit, particularly at place-kicker. Signee Tucker Day is expected to compete for both the starting kicker and punter duties despite being a true freshman.

"Competition is my favorite thing," Day said. "I am sure I will get a little nervous at first when we open the season. But pressure has been nothing for me and I've been on that stage all my life. I want that pressure. I don't plan on having a bad game, but if I do, it is all about how you recover."

Wide receiver Keith Mixon contributed on special teams as a returner and may make a significant impact in that role again.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

From MSU's perspective, the Bulldogs hopefully learned a lesson after their season-opening upset loss against South Alabama last year. This season has a similar start with games against Charleston Southern and Louisiana Tech.

It doesn't take long, of course, for things to get far more difficult.

The Bulldogs then have a three-week stretch, which may be an early make-or-break one, with games against LSU, Georgia and Auburn, with the latter two on the road. That also means defensive coordinator Todd Grantham will return to Athens, where he coached after his stint in the NFL.

MSU plays BYU, Kentucky, Texas A&M and UMass before a late-season swing that can determine its fortunes. The Bulldogs play host to Alabama, visit Arkansas and then welcome Ole Miss on Thanksgiving Day to end the season.

— Will Sammon

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.9	16
Rushing	233.1	21
Passing	280.7	22
Total	513.8	8
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.7	23
Rushing	151.5	44
Passing	272.8	114
Total	424.4	84
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
0	- 0.0	T-59

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.4	33
Rushing	144.1	100
Passing	316.4	14
Total	460.5	31
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.2	36
Rushing	174.6	70
Passing	216.5	57
Total	391.2	56
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.31	T-92

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.4	56
Rushing	230.5	23
Passing	209.7	T-89
Total	440.2	44
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.8	93
Rushing	177.5	70
Passing	281.5	120
Total	459.1	110
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.54	T-24

NOTEBOOK

Mississippi State's Signing Day was rather mundane, except for **Willie Gay's** announcement that he had signed with the Bulldogs. The four-star linebacker out of Starkville High in Mississippi is the true freshman with the best opportunity for playing time among the group reporting to campus this summer.

Gay (6-2, 223) runs a 4.56 40 and has been clocked as low as 4.53. MSU wants him to bulk up to 235 pounds. **Dan Mullen** said he has a shot for playing time at outside linebacker despite Gay playing inside linebacker at high school.

"If I can go in and start at SAM, then I do it because I just really want to play and make a big impact early if I can, because I know Coach is giving me the chance to," Gay said.

• Mississippi State hired two familiar faces on the coaching staff.

D.J. Looney, who spent 2016 as an offensive graduate assistant at Georgia, is the Bulldogs' new tight ends coach. Looney was an offensive lineman at MSU and then in 2011 was a graduate assistant for the team.

Brett Elliott, a former graduate assistant for the Bulldogs, is back in Starkville as the team's quarterbacks coach. Elliott, regarded by many as one of the top up-and-coming assistants in college football, served as an offensive quality control coach at MSU under Mullen from 2012-14. Elliott spent last season as the offensive coordinator at Texas State.

• Cornerback was a problem in 2016 for Mississippi State. The issue stemmed from a lack of depth and inexperience, but both concerns may now be resolved.

Jamal Peters will begin his second season at corner after moving from safety. He ended the season as MSU's best cover corner. **Lashard Durr** is also back for a second full season at the position.

Redshirt freshman **Cam Dantzler** has drawn rave reviews from coaches and players. True freshman **Tyler Williams** was an early enrollee. **Tolando Cleveland**, a projected starter for the 2016 team, is back after tearing his ACL last August. He should be in line for significant playing time.

BULLDOGS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
7 Nick Fitzgerald	QB	6-5	230	Jr.	Richmond Hill, GA
10 Keytaon Thompson	QB	6-4	222	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
21 Nick Gibson	RB	5-11	211	So.	Birmingham, AL
33 Dontavian Lee	RB	6-1	235	Jr.	Hattiesburg
26 Alec Murphy	RB	6-0	230	So.	Nixa, MO
27 Aeris Williams	RB	6-1	222	Jr.	West Point
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
17 Jamal Couch	WR	6-4	230	So.	Phenix City, AL
22 Malik Dear	WR	5-9	224	Jr.	Jackson
6 Donald Gray	WR	5-10	204	Sr.	Memphis, TN
86 Jesse Jackson	WR	6-2	213	Jr.	Petal
87 Osirus Mitchell	WR	6-4	210	Fr.	Sarasota, FL
23 Keith Mixon	WR	5-8	184	So.	Birmingham, AL
5 Gabe Myles	WR	6-0	192	Sr.	Starkville
18 Deddrick Thomas	WR	5-9	185	So.	Memphis, TN
20 Reggie Todd	WR	6-4	204	Fr.	Mobile, AL
85 Austin Williams	WR	6-3	208	Fr.	Ocean Springs
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
82 Farrod Green	TE	6-3	239	So.	Wesson
81 Justin Johnson	TE	6-3	243	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
84 Dontea Jones	TE	6-4	232	Fr.	McCool
80 Christian Roberson	TE	6-5	241	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
83 Jordan Thomas	TE	6-5	284	Sr.	Sumrall
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
61 Deion Calhoun	OL	6-3	315	Jr.	Pleasant Grove, AL
58 Tommy Champion	OL	6-5	330	Jr.	Jackson
72 Ronald Cochran	OL	6-4	310	Jr.	Olive Branch
54 Greg Eiland	OL	6-8	319	Fr.	Philadelphia
74 Elgton Jenkins	OL	6-4	308	Jr.	Clarksdale
75 Harrison Moon	OL	6-5	290	So.	Chattanooga, TN
56 Dareuan Parker	OL	6-4	320	Fr.	Olive Branch
68 Tyre Phillips	OL	6-5	355	Jr.	Grenada
55 Martinas Rankin	OL	6-5	305	Sr.	Mendenhall
51 Stewart Reese	OL	6-5	333	Fr.	Fort Pierce, FL
67 Michael Story	OL	6-4	305	So.	Ripley
79 Evans Wilkerson	OL	6-5	309	So.	Ridgeland
73 Darryl Williams	OL	6-2	305	So.	Bessemer, AL
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
43 Fletcher Adams	DL	6-2	270	So.	Brandon
97 Lee Autry	DL	6-2	315	Jr.	Albemarle, NC
96 Tre Brown	DL	6-4	303	Jr.	Ackerman
90 Grant Harris	DL	6-3	285	Jr.	Bolton
95 Braxton Hoyett	DL	6-3	303	Jr.	Pelham, AL
91 James Jackson	DL	6-3	339	Fr.	Pascagoula
92 Kendell Jones	DL	6-4	281	So.	Pinson, AL
52 Kobe Jones	DL	6-4	270	Fr.	Starkville
88 Deion Pope	DL	6-4	304	Jr.	Collins
93 Chauncey Rivers	DL	6-3	284	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
98 Jeffery Simmons	DL	6-4	307	So.	Macon
42 Marquiss Spencer	DL	6-4	271	So.	Greenwood
94 Montez Sweat	DL	6-6	241	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
34 Cory Thomas	DL	6-5	303	Jr.	Bessemer, AL

Linebackers	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
4 Gerri Green	LB	6-4	245	Jr.	Greenville
46 Dezmond Harris	LB	6-4	243	Sr.	Bessemer, AL
3 Traver Jung	LB	6-4	229	Sr.	Greenville
44 Leo Lewis	LB	6-2	235	So.	Brookhaven
45 Josiah Phillips	LB	6-4	242	Jr.	Starkville
40 Erroll Thompson	LB	6-1	250	Fr.	Florence, AL
50 Tim Washington	LB	6-3	231	So.	Yazoo City
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
38 Jonathan Abram	DB	6-0	214	Jr.	Columbia
1 Brandon Bryant	DB	6-0	213	Jr.	Tunica
16 Korey Charles	DB	5-10	179	Fr.	Miami, FL
7 Tolando Cleveland	DB	6-0	194	Sr.	Powder Springs, GA
32 Brian Cole	DB	6-2	203	Jr.	Saginaw, MI
13 Cameron Dantzler	DB	6-2	174	Fr.	Hammond, LA
25 Lashard Durr	DB	5-11	195	Sr.	Gulfport
9 Jamoral Graham	DB	5-10	180	Sr.	Decatur
12 J.T. Gray	DB	6-0	202	Sr.	Clarksdale
28 Jaquarius Landrews	DB	6-0	198	Jr.	Summit
41 Mark McLaurin	DB	6-2	215	Jr.	Collins
29 C.J. Morgan	DB	6-0	202	Fr.	Bossier City, LA
2 Jamal Peters	DB	6-2	218	Jr.	Bassfield
24 Chris Rayford	DB	6-0	199	Jr.	Byhalia
31 Maurice Smitherman	DB	5-10	190	So.	Adamsville, AL
30 Chris Stamps	DB	6-0	182	So.	Vicksburg
19 Tyler Williams	DB	6-2	172	Fr.	Oxford
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
49 Stephen Adegoke	ATH	6-0	211	Jr.	Snellville, GA
65 Brett Armour	ATH	6-1	279	So.	Brighton, TN
66 Joel Baldwin	SN	6-3	219	Jr.	Tupelo
53 Hunter Bradley	SN	6-3	230	Sr.	Collierville, TN
37 Bennie Braswell III	ATH	5-9	176	Sr.	Olive Branch
2 Logan Burnett	ATH	6-2	186	Fr.	Pelham, AL
47 Jace Christmann	K/P	6-1	189	Fr.	Houston, TX
43 Logan Cooke	P/K	6-5	228	Sr.	Darbun
88 Aaron Hamaker	ATH	6-4	280	Jr.	Little Rock, AR
77 Jawon Johnson	ATH	6-2	305	Jr.	Crawford
54 Cameron Miller	ATH	6-1	208	Fr.	Odessa, FL
76 Blake Mitchell	ATH	6-0	300	Fr.	Brentwood, TN
39 Zak Neary	ATH	6-1	198	Jr.	Adamsville, TN
19 Travis O'Connor	ATH	6-1	190	Fr.	Kenner, LA
23 Allen Perkins	ATH	6-0	215	So.	Pelham, AL
29 Peyton Pisacane	ATH	5-9	185	Fr.	Franklin, TN
28 Tristan Pisacane	ATH	5-9	180	Fr.	Franklin, TN
87 Wyatt Powell	ATH	5-9	192	So.	Ridgeland
48 Chris Redmon	ATH	6-0	220	Fr.	Fayetteville, AR
23 Kody Schexnayder	P	5-10	197	So.	River Ridge, LA
33 John Scifers	ATH	6-1	180	Fr.	Euharlee, GA
59 Nathan Swanson	ATH	6-5	220	Fr.	Norcross, GA
89 Jefferson Teel	ATH	6-5	200	Sr.	Bartlett, TN
26 Hayes Walker	ATH	5-11	196	Jr.	Jackson
37 Brad Wall	ATH	5-8	175	So.	Ocean Springs
71 Ben Wilson	ATH	6-4	313	Fr.	Columbia, SC

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On quarterback play:** "After one year in the NFL, Dak Prescott opened a big question mark on Dan Mullen. Mullen had a good four-year run (34-18), but did he underachieve with Prescott? Did he underutilize his skills? He was an elite player. State played with an unproven commodity (Nick Fitzgerald) and he did a good job. The head coach is good at calling plays. If the quarterback plays well and they can find a running back, they'll shock some people."

• **On the program:** "For Mississippi State fans, Mullen's done a good job. But nobody (another school) has bit on him because he's a difficult guy to get along with. But if you're 7-5 at Mississippi State, they ought to be happy because Starkville is a hell hole. If not for the junior colleges in the state, they wouldn't have a program."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
N. Fitzgerald	13	124.3	196	361	10	54.3	2423	21	74	186.4
D. Williams	5	128.6	31	47	0	66.0	272	2	27	54.4

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
F. Ross	13	72	917	12.7	12	60	70.5
D. Gray	13	41	709	17.3	5	74	54.5
M. Dear	12	23	264	11.5	2	33	22.0

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
N. Fitzgerald	13	195	1495	120	1375	7.1	16	74	105.8
A. Williams	13	137	731	11	720	5.3	4	36	55.4
A. Shumpert	13	55	270	13	257	4.7	1	27	19.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: R. Brown 102, L. Lewis 79, J.T. Gray 71
Tackles for loss: J. Calvin 11.5, A.J. Jefferson 10.5, J.T. Gray 8
Sacks: J. Calvin 7, A.J. Jefferson 4, two tied with 2.5
Interceptions: J. Graham 3, K. Coman 2, M.McLaurin 2, J. Peters 2

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Willie Gay, LB

The four-star recruit has the instincts and speed to make plays on the field sideline to sideline. Look for the athletic and hard-hitting 6-2, 223-pound Gay to earn significant snaps as a true freshman for the hometown Mississippi State Bulldogs this fall.

Keytaon Thompson, QB

Look for this four-star signal-caller to play for the Bulldogs this fall. The 6-4, 222-pound Thompson is a dual-threat quarterback who can hurt a defense with his arm or legs. Thompson enrolled early, went through spring drills, and should have a firm grasp of the offense this fall.

Chauncey Rivers, DE

The four-star junior college recruit enrolled early and will be a big part of the Mississippi State defense this fall. The 6-3, 284-pound Rivers is an athletic, yet powerful, weakside defensive end for the Bulldogs.

SLEEPER

Tyler Williams, CB

Enrolling early and going through spring drills certainly helped the 6-2, 172-pound cornerback make the transition from high school to the SEC. Despite being a three-star recruit, look for Williams to be a playmaker on the Mississippi State defense. His elite length and quick feet will give receivers fits.

2018 NEEDS

Mississippi State is looking to add several talented receivers to its roster in 2018 after only inking one last cycle. The Bulldogs want to add playmakers on the outside to help their young quarterback Keytaon Thompson. Look for MSU to sign at least three receivers next cycle.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	5	18	1
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	24
Average Stars	3.17
Total Stars	76
National Rank: 24	SEC: 9

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Johnathan Abram	DB	6-0	200	✪✪✪✪	Columbia	Jones County Junior College
Ranked No. 10 junior college player nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 23 tackles, including 2.5 tackles for loss, one pass broken up, and one fumble caused in 2016… In 2015, had 25 tackles, including one tackle for loss, at Georgia.						
Lee Autry	DL	6-2	315	✪✪✪	Albermarle, NC	Itawamba C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 3 junior college defensive tackle nationally… Had 42 tackles, including 12.5 tackles for loss, and five quarterback sacks in two seasons.						
Tommy Champion	OL	6-5	330	✪✪✪	Jackson	Copiah-Lincoln C.C.
Ranked No. 5 junior college offensive tackle nationally by 247Sports.com.						
Brian Cole	DB	6-2	200	✪✪✪	Saginaw, MI	East Mississippi C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 4 junior college safety and No. 46 player nationally… In 2016, had 54 tackles, one quarterback sack, three fumbles caused, returned one fumble for touchdown, and blocked three kicks… In 2015 played for University of Michigan.						
Jaquavious Collins	DL	6-4	288	✪✪✪	Jackson, GA	Jackson
As a senior, had 36 tackles, including nine tackles for loss, and two quarterback sacks.						
Josh Cooper	OL	6-7	355	✪✪✪	Haughton, LA	Haughton
247Sports.com rated among top 50 offensive guards nationally.						
Tucker Day	K/P	6-2	195	✪✪	Brentwood, TN	Brentwood
Ranked No. 9 punter nationally by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Averaged 39.3 yards per punt as a senior… Made 15 field goals with a long of 50 yards.						
Tyler Dunning	LB	6-0	229	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	St. Thomas Aquinas
247Sports.com rated No. 23 outside linebacker nationally and No. 119 player in Florida… Helped team to three consecutive state championships… Had 82 tackles, including 14.5 tackles for loss, one fumble caused, and five fumbles recovered in final two seasons.						
Noah Elliss	DL	6-4	330	✪✪✪	Denver, CO	Valor Christian
Ranked No. 23 defensive tackle nationally by 247Sports.com… Helped team to two consecutive state championships… As a senior, had 46 tackles, including 10.5 tackles for loss, and two quarterback sacks… Had 58 tackles, including 16.5 tackles for loss, and 9.5 quarterback sacks as a junior.						
Willie Gay	LB	6-2	223	✪✪✪✪	Starkville	Starkville
247Sports.com rated No. 3 outside linebacker and No. 73 player nationally and No. 2 player in Mississippi… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Had 83 tackles, including nine tackles for loss… As a junior, had 84 tackles, including 17 tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks, four interceptions, and two fumbles caused.						
Landon Guidry	DB	6-1	185	✪✪✪	Spring Hill, TN	Independence
Ranked No. 28 player in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 1,612 all-purpose yards and scored 13 touchdowns… Had 38 tackles, including two tackles for loss, four passes broken up, and three interceptions, returning one for touchdown… Helped team to state championship as a junior… Had 80 tackles and eight tackles for loss.						
Kylin Hill	RB	5-11	210	✪✪✪✪	Columbus	Columbus
Ranked No. 13 running back nationally and No. 5 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… Helped team to two consecutive state playoff appearances… Had 1,750 yards rushing and scored 27 touchdowns, averaging almost 10 yards per carry, as a senior.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
James Jackson	DL	6-3	345	✪✪✪	Pascagoula	Pascagoula
Participated in spring practice… Ranked No. 24 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 26 tackles.						
Jaquarius Landrews	DB	5-11	190	✪✪✪	Summit	Copiah-Lincoln C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 7 junior college safety nationally… Averaged eight yards per carry over prep career… Had 872 yards rushing as a senior.						
Aaron Odom	DL	6-3	250	✪✪✪	Jackson	Callaway
Parade All-American… Ranked No. 10 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 166 tackles, including 25 tackles for loss, and 28 quarterback sacks… Had 124 tackles, including 28 tackles for loss, and 18 quarterback sacks as a junior.						
Tyre Phillips	OL	6-5	355	✪✪✪	Grenada	East Mississippi C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 1 junior college guard and No. 80 junior college player nationally.						
Deion Pope	DL	6-3	300	✪✪✪	Collins	Copiah-Lincoln C.C.
Ranked No. 1 junior college defensive tackle and No. 24 junior college player nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 51 tackles, including seven tackles for loss, and one quarterback sack as a sophomore… As a freshman, had 42 tackles, including 12.5 tackles for loss, and 7.5 quarterback sacks.						
Montravious Richardson	OL	6-7	300	✪✪✪	Albany, GA	Westover
Ranked among top 10 offensive tackles in Georgia by 247Sports.com.						
Chauncey Rivers	DL	6-3	284	✪✪✪✪	Stone Mountain, GA	East Mississippi C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 10 junior college player nationally… Played four games at Georgia in 2015… As a prep senior, had 99 tackles, including 19 tackles for loss, 10 quarterback sacks, two fumbles caused and one interception.						
Cordavien Suggs	OL	6-6	285	✪✪✪	Jackson	Fletcher (FL)
Ranked among top 10 offensive tackles in Florida by 247Sports.com.						
Montez Sweat	DL	6-6	240	✪✪✪	Stone Mountain, GA	Copiah-Lincoln C.C.
247Sports.com rated No. 6 junior college weakside defensive end and No. 52 junior college player nationally… In 2016, had 39 tackles, including six tackles for loss, five quarterback sacks, two fumbles caused and one interception.						
Keytaon Thompson	QB	6-4	222	✪✪✪✪	New Orleans, LA	Landry-Walker
Participated in spring practice… Gatorade Louisiana Player of the Year… Ranked No. 1 quarterback in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Had 10,737 career yards of total offense and accounted for 149 touchdowns… As a senior, completed 198 of 331 passes for 3,825 yards and 46 touchdowns… Had 1,434 yards rushing and 26 touchdowns.						
Austin Williams	WR	6-3	208	✪✪✪	Ocean Springs	Ocean Springs
Participated in spring practice… 247Sports.com rated No. 15 player in Mississippi… All-State… Had 150 career receptions for 2,349 yards and 28 touchdowns… Had 48 receptions for 697 yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior.						
Tyler Williams	DB	6-2	172	✪✪✪	Oxford	Lafayette
Participated in spring practice… Ranked No. 16 player in Mississippi by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state championship… As a senior, had 795 yards receiving and nine touchdowns… Had 43 tackles, two interceptions and seven passes broken up.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Aeris Williams More Confident Than Ever

Aeris Williams is nicknamed A-Train. Expect to see a lot of his signature "cranking the train" gesture after long runs in 2017.

"It's going to be hard to stop me this year," Williams said. "I promise you."

In the spring, according to coaches, teammates and, yes, himself, Williams operated with an unrivaled and noticeable confidence.

"The confident factor is there," running backs coach Greg Knox said. "He is very confident in what he's doing. He is very knowledgeable in what he is doing. He is playing with that confidence that you want a guy to play with."

And the visible size, too.

"I'm way bigger than what I was last year," said Williams, up to 222 pounds in the spring. "Last year I was like 212 pounds."

But it is the belief in himself that is what's really different about the 6-1 junior.

In MSU's St. Petersburg Bowl win over Miami (Ohio), Williams had 64 rushing yards on 12 carries. Before that, he capped a breakout stretch with 191 yards and two touchdowns on 25 carries against Ole Miss in the Egg Bowl.

Against BYU on Oct. 14, Williams recorded 82 yards on 21 attempts in his first legitimate shot as a featured back. He had no more than five carries in each of the first five games of last season. Then, against Texas A&M on Nov. 5, he had 140 yards on 24 carries.

"When he got smarter," Knox said, "he got better."

In studying more film, Williams picked up on little things, such as planting on his outside foot instead of his inside foot, and realizing he needs to keep his feet moving while blocking. He said film study led to an understanding of how to break long runs.

"He plays like a dominating player," Knox said. "He is determined on every snap to be ... I don't want to say perfect, but to execute at a high level."

Can he do it over the course of a full season?

RB AERIS WILLIAMS

Photo by Matt Bush-USA TODAY Sports

MSU needs him to. It's the next step for Williams. Now is his time and it's critical for him to excel; the Bulldogs do not return another running back who reached 100 yards last season. Four-star signee Kylin Hill does not report until June.

"He knows how important that is," Knox said. "I think he feeds off of that."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/mississippistate

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB NICK FITZGERALD

The Bulldogs opened the season by winning just two of their first six games, but a second-half surge by the sophomore helped the team win four of its last six games. ... Fitzgerald led the SEC in rushing touchdowns and racked up 37 total TDs. ... His average of 105.8 rushing yards per game was third nationally among quarterbacks, behind Louisville's Heisman winner Lamar Jackson and USF's Quinton Flowers. ... Had eight games with 100 rushing yards.

EMERGING STAR

LB LEO LEWIS

Lewis made 79 tackles last season, which was the most among freshmen in the SEC. ... He had 4.5 tackles for a loss, and that's a number that may grow if the defense pressures the quarterback and gets to the backfield like how new MSU coordinator Todd Grantham anticipates. ... Lewis said his goals include making the All-SEC first team and becoming a finalist for the Butkus Award, given annually to the top linebacker in the country.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE/LB MONTEZ SWEAT

At 6-6 and 241 pounds, Sweat, a junior in his first year with the program after a one-year stint at Copiah-Lincoln CC, has a long, rangy and muscular build. ... Sweat had 39 tackles, including six for loss, with five sacks for Copiah-Lincoln last season after transferring from Michigan State. ... Coordinator Todd Grantham, who also coaches linebackers, has described Sweat as "relentless" on a few occasions. ... He played in two games for the Spartans in 2015, but was then suspended.

Lindy's SPORTS

Order Online
www.lindyssports.com

FOOTBALL ANNUALS
❑ NATIONAL COLLEGE ❑ SEC ❑ BIG 10 ❑ ROTOWORLD FANTASY
❑ PRO FOOTBALL ❑ PRO FANTASY ❑ NFL DRAFT GUIDE

IN THE HUDDLE ANNUALS
❑ ALABAMA

BASEBALL
❑ FANTASY ❑ PREVIEW ❑ ROTOWORLD FANTASY

BASKETBALL
❑ COLLEGE ❑ PRO

SPECIAL ISSUES
❑ WORLD SERIES ❑ NFL WORLD CHAMPIONS ❑ NATIONAL CHAMPIONS
❑ NBA CHAMPIONS ❑ BIG TEN CHAMPIONS

DOMESTIC SHIPPING (Alabama Residents add 9% Sales Tax)

ROTOWORLD BASEBALL, ROTOWORLD FOOTBALL,
DRAFT, FANTASY BASEBALL, FANTASY FOOTBALL..... (Includes Shipping) $10.75
ALL OTHER INDIVIDUAL COPIES ..... (Includes Shipping) $11.75
IN THE HUDDLE INDIVIDUAL COPIES ..... (Includes Shipping) $12.75
BACK ISSUES ..... (Includes Shipping) $12.75

FOREIGN SHIPPING

CANADIAN ORDERS ADD	INDIVIDUAL $14.95
MEXICO ORDERS ADD	INDIVIDUAL $18.95
OVERSEAS ORDERS ADD	INDIVIDUAL $18.95

(INTERNATIONAL ORDERS SHIP SURFACE - 4-6 WEEKS)

SPECIAL OFFERS

- ALL 18 MAGAZINES ..... (Includes Shipping) $117.00
- 10 MAGAZINES ..... (Includes Shipping) $80.00
- 5 MAGAZINES ..... (Includes Shipping) $45.00

DOMESTIC ORDERS ONLY

Alabama Residents Add 9% Sales Tax

LINDY'S SPORTS ANNUALS
2100 CENTENNIAL DR. SUITE 100
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35216
PHONE: 205-871-1182 / FAX: 205-871-1184

COPIES ACCEPTED

NAME
COMPANY
STREET ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP
TELEPHONE
E-MAIL
❑ CHECK OR MONEY ORDER ENCLOSED
PLEASE CHARGE: ❑ VISA ❑ MASTER CARD ❑ DISCOVER ❑ AMERICAN EXPRESS
ACCOUNT # EXP.
SIGNATURE

MISSOURI TIGERS

For more coverage of the Tigers, visit missouri.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Heupel **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** DeMontie Cross **STADIUM:** Memorial Stadium/Faurot Field: 71,004

ODOM POISED FOR BIGGER SECOND SEASON

Barry Odom's debut season as Missouri's head coach ended better than it began. The Tigers won two of their final three games but still fell short of reaching a bowl, finishing at 4-8, MU's worst record since 2000.

As he prepared for his second season following an offseason marked by more change, Odom felt more comfortable in his role, his roster and his staff. No matter how the 2017 season unfolds, the Tigers are in better position to succeed than a year ago. Why?

For one, Odom spent more time this offseason on actual football matters, turning down more speaking engagements and public relations opportunities he felt compelled to address last year when the program was reeling from a turbulent 2015 season.

"I've spent a lot more time coaching football. I'm a lot happier than I was a year ago at this time," he said this spring.

"I've got a lot more comfort and I also feel the urgency on how much better we need to get. ... There are times that I didn't make our program better on some of the things that I said yes to (last year). I know what I have to do to get this team where we need to be."

Missouri's undoing last year came on defense, Odom's specialty. The Tigers had the SEC's No. 2 defense in 2015 when Odom was Gary Pinkel's coordinator. In 2016, the Tigers gave up more yards per game than any team in the conference.

The reclamation project begins with two new positions coaches: Brick Haley takes over the defensive line, while Brian Odom, the head coach's younger brother, will coach outside linebackers. As for personnel, the Tigers must replace several starters but return nine of last year's top 13 tacklers.

Odom had to learn on the go last year. He and coordinator DeMontie Cross changed the scheme to a read-and-react system that caused friction with veteran players who had grown accustomed to a more aggressive philosophy along the front four. By midseason, Odom scrapped the changes and went back to his former scheme, also taking over play-calling duties. He had to scale back his role coaching special teams.

All the maneuvers led to an erratic season and questions about Odom's readiness to run his own program in the SEC.

This spring, players and coaches said all the right things about burying last season's defensive issues.

"When you have guys on the same page and nobody's really worried about who gets the accolades, that's the makings of something really special," Cross said. "Right now we've got a group of guys who are all happy about being part of something."

OFFENSE

A young offense needed time to learn the nuances of Josh Heupel's brand of the no-huddle spread last year. But while the Tigers had breakdowns against the SEC's best defenses, Heupel's offense still ended the year No. 1 in the league in yards per game, averaging 500.5.

Oklahoma State is the only other power conference team that returns a 3,000-yard passer, a 1,000-yard rusher and a 1,000-yard receiver.

The Mizzou passer is junior Drew Lock. He was more accurate and efficient under Heupel's watch last season but needs to play better against MU's best opponents: Against power conference opponents, he completed just 45.5 percent of his throws with an efficiency rating of only 107.6.

Lock will again have one of the country's best young backs by his side in Heupel's shotgun offense.

Damarea Crockett didn't take over as MU's primary back until midway through the season, but he finished with a Mizzou freshman record 1,062 yards despite serving a suspension for the final game and only getting two touches in the season's first game. The 5-11, 225-pound back is the total package and gives the Tigers power between the tackles and big-play potential once he breaks past the point of attack.

Not to be forgotten is senior Ish Witter, a capable pass-catcher, valuable blocker and tough runner who quietly ran for 750 yards last year. He's a favorite of Odom's staff and will play a vital role in an offense that strives for balance.

J'Mon Moore, the SEC's only returning

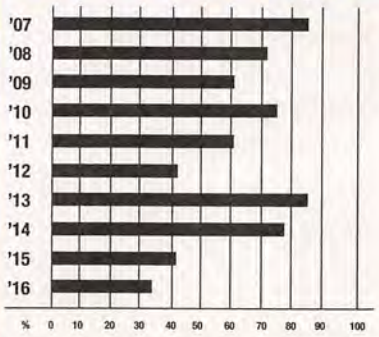
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	MISSOURI STATE	4-7
Sept. 9	SOUTH CAROLINA	6-7
Sept. 16	PURDUE	3-9
Sept. 23	AUBURN	8-5
Oct. 7	at Kentucky	7-6
Oct. 14	at Georgia	8-5
Oct. 21	IDAHO	9-4
Oct. 28	at Connecticut	3-9
Nov. 4	FLORIDA	9-4
Nov. 11	TENNESSEE	9-4
Nov. 18	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Nov. 25	at Arkansas	7-6

RESULTS

4-8, 2-6		
L	at West Virginia	11-26
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	61-21
L	GEORGIA	27-28
W	DELAWARE STATE	79-0
L	at LSU	7-42
L	at Florida	14-40
L	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	45-51
L	KENTUCKY	21-35
L	at South Carolina	21-31
W	VANDERBILT	26-17
L	at Tennessee	37-63
W	ARKANSAS	28-24

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Columbia, Mo.

2016:
4-8 overall, 2-6 SEC (7th, East)

COACH:
Barry Odom — At Missouri and overall: 4-8, 1 year

RETURNING STARTERS:
16; 10 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Drew Lock, RB Damarea Crockett, WR J'Mon Moore, WR/PR Johnathon Johnson, RT Paul Adams, DE Marcell Frazier, DT Terry Beckner Jr., LB Eric Beisel

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
With 10 starters back on offense, the Tigers have high expectations for a unit that led the SEC in yards per game last year. Crockett and Ish Witter form a potent 1-2 punch at running back, while Lock should continue to thrive in his second year piloting Josh Heupel's offense. Moore leads a deep and seasoned receiver corps.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Tackling was a problem last year and the Tigers will be less experienced in the first two levels of the defense. The defensive front is short on proven playmakers. MU will have two new starters at cornerback. PK Tucker McCann struggled as a freshman and could have a short leash if accuracy issues persist.

KEY LOSSES:
TE Sean Culkin, DE Charles Harris, DT Rickey Hatley, LB Michael Scherer, LB Donavin Newsom, CB Aarion Penton

OVERVIEW:
For the first time since 2001-02, the Tigers are coming off consecutive losing seasons. Odom reshuffled his defensive staff and tinkered with the scheme again. If the Tigers can tackle and cover they should return to the postseason, because the offense should again be tough to stop.

KEY NUMBER:
92.3 The percentage of last year's 6,006 yards of offense that came from players who return to the roster in 2017, including five of the team's top six rushers.

WR
J'Mon
MOORE

Photo by Joe Robbins

QB

Drew Lock

Photo by Joe Robbins

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Drew Lock***	Jr.	Third-year starter needs to make move from good to great.	Micah Wilson, Fr.
RB	**Damarea Crockett***	So.	Poised for monster year after rushing for 1,062 yards.	Ish Witter, Sr.
WR	**J'Mon Moore***	Sr.	Needs to clean up drops after leading SEC in receiving yards per game.	Nate Brown, Jr.
WR	**Johnathon Johnson***	So.	Slippery slot receiver gives Tigers big-play threat on every touch.	Richaud Floyd, So.
WR	**Dimetrios Mason***	So.	Speedy outside threat coming off 587-yard freshman season.	Emanuel Hall, Jr.
TE	Kendall Blanton	Jr.	Led tight ends with three TDs last year; coming off ankle surgery.	Jason Reese, Sr.
LT	**Tyler Howell***	Sr.	Massive blindside blocker (6-8, 330) returns after strong debut season.	Yasir Durant, So.
LG	**Kevin Pendleton***	Jr.	335-pound mauler played big role in run game's progress last year.	A.J. Harris, So.
C	**Alec Abeln***	Sr.	Versatile veteran can play all three interior positions.	Jonah Dubinski, So.
RG	**Adam Ploudre***	Sr.	Former walk-on emerged as reliable injury replacement last year.	Tre'Vour Simms, So.
RT	**Paul Adams***	Jr.	All-SEC candidate was line's top-graded performer last year.	Pompey Coleman, Fr.
PK	**Tucker McCann***	So.	Coming off shaky freshman season, when he missed four PATs.	Andrew Carr, Jr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	**Marcell Frazier***	Sr.	Team's most proven pass-rusher had 7.5 sacks in 2016.	Tre Williams, Fr.
DT	Terry Beckner Jr.	Jr.	Last two seasons were cut short by torn knee ligaments.	Malik Young, Jr.
DT	Rashad Brandon	Jr.	Junior college transfer was unblockable at times this spring.	A.J. Logan, Sr.
DE	Nate Howard	Jr.	Could become MU's next impact edge rusher.	Jordan Harold, Sr.
LB	Terez Hall	Jr.	Career backup gets first chance to start in remodeled LB corps.	Joey Burkett, Sr.
LB	**Eric Beisel***	Sr.	Productive tackler late last year, replacing injured Michael Scherer.	Cale Garrett, So.
NB	Kaleb Prewett	Jr.	K-State transfer emerged in spring; can play OLB or nickel.	T.J. Warren, So.
CB	DeMarkus Acy	So.	Rangy 6-2 corner earned limited snaps as a freshman last year.	Adam Sparks, Fr.
CB	Logan Cheadle	Sr.	Smaller at 5-10, but he's coming off strong spring.	Christian Holmes, So.
S	**Ronnell Perkins***	So.	The most physical tackler in a deep safety group.	Thomas Wilson, Sr.
S	**Cam Hilton***	Jr.	Undersized and needs to add bulk, but he's athletic in coverage.	Anthony Sherrils, Sr.
P	**Corey Fatony***	Jr.	Has 38 punts of 50 yards or more in two seasons as reliable starter.	Tucker McCann, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

1,000-yard receiver, is Lock's favorite target and gives the Tigers size and speed on the outside, but the senior needs to clean up the drops that stalled many drives last season. Dimetrios Mason (outside) and Johnathon Johnson (inside) figure to reprise their starting roles as dangerous players who can score any time they touch the ball.

At tight end, the Tigers have to replace starter Sean Culkin. They will lean on the tandem of Jason Reese and Kendall Blanton, who combined for 24 catches and five TDs last year.

The biggest difference between last year's offense and this year's edition resides along the line, where the Tigers return seven players who started games last year. A group that began 2016 with only one former starter was MU's most improved unit last fall, allowing a league-low 14 sacks on 37.3 pass attempts per game.

MU's 2.9 tackles for loss allowed per game was the best average for a Division I offense since 2005.

"The outside world looked at us as the big question mark (last year)," right tackle Paul Adams said. "We all looked at each other and (said), 'We know the scheme really well. We've got the guys and the talent to do it. Now we've just got to go do it.' None of us really got to showcase our talent the year before and we finally got to do it."

DEFENSE

There were plenty of promising signs for Mizzou's defense in the spring game.

The Tigers were missing two projected starters along the front four — defensive end Marcell Frazier (broken arm) and tackle Terry Beckner Jr. (knee surgery) — and gave up only one scoring drive in six possessions against the No. 1 offense.

Unlike last year, the tackling was crisp. Downfield coverage was tight. A unit looking to erase last year's struggles showed signs of recovery.

"Last year is in the past," defensive tackle A.J. Logan said. "Yeah, it left a salty taste in my mouth, but I'm ready to move on and bring the new defense back."

Halfway through last season, Odom unchained his pass rushers and scrapped the complicated pre-snap reads that had created tension between some players and coaches. The Tigers produced a more potent pass rush in the second half of the season and plan to stick with the approach this year.

Nate Howard and Tre Williams emerged as the next wave of edge rushers to help replace All-SEC junior Charles Harris, who left early for the NFL Draft. Junior college transfer Rashad Brandon stepped in to give the Tigers a 305-pound wrecking ball at tackle. Beckner should be fully recovered by preseason camp. The Tigers expected to add six defensive linemen this summer.

At linebacker, Eric Beisel became a starter midway through last season when senior Michael Scherer went down with a knee injury. Beisel will be flanked by Terez Hall on the outside.

Kansas State transfer Kaleb Prewett ar-

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. J'Mon Moore WR 6-3 190 4.57 Sr.

From Jeremy Maclin to Dorial Green-Beckham, Missouri has developed quite a reputation for producing athletic pass-catchers in recent years. Moore has emerged in the past two seasons as the team's next NFL prospect to watch.

The Texas native signed with the Tigers as a highly regarded prep, choosing Mizzou over the likes of Southern California, Miami, Michigan State and the home-state Longhorns, among others.

Moore was one of the few bright spots in Missouri's passing attack in 2015, leading the team with 29 receptions for 350 yards as a redshirt sophomore ... and then he leapt into stardom last season, leading the SEC with 1,012 receiving yards on 62 catches, including a career-high eight touchdown receptions.

Moore has an athletic frame with long arms and intriguing body control, which allows him to contort his body to make difficult grabs. He possesses enough straight-line speed to challenge defensive backs vertically, as well as the quickness and balance to create separation on underneath routes.

2. Anthony Sherrils	FS	6-0	200	4.54	Sr.
3. Alec Abeln	C	6-3	290	5.20	Sr.
4. Thomas Wilson	SS	5-11	190	4.55	Sr.
5. Drew Lock	QB	6-3	205	4.79	Jr

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

rived as a safety with starting experience in the Big 12, but he converted into a hybrid defender who can stay on the field as an outside linebacker in MU's 4-3 base package or as the nickel in a 4-2-5 look. He was MU's leading tackler in the spring game, making stops all over the field.

Odom, needing to replace his senior cornerbacks, has three leading candidates: sophomores DeMarkus Acy and Christian Holmes, and senior Logan Cheadle. Acy and Holmes, 6-2 and 6-1, give the Tigers the coveted height on the outside that Odom's staff prefers.

Four safeties return with starting experience, although the staff seemed to favor the younger options last year, Ronnell Perkins and Cam Hilton.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Tucker McCann was Mizzou's first kicker in years to earn a scholarship out of high school, but he struggled from the start of his freshman year, losing his job midway through last season. He made only 6 of 12 field-goal attempts and missed four extra points.

McCann gave the coaches some renewed faith, drilling a 47-yard field goal in the spring game.

The Tigers feel more secure about their punter, junior Corey Fatony, who owns one of the stronger legs in the SEC.

MU's punt return team ranked third in the SEC as Johnathon Johnson led the league with 14 yards per return. The Tigers could use a boost in kickoff returns after ranking 13th in the league last fall. Johnson, Damarea Crockett, Anthony Sherrils and some newcomers could figure into the mix.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

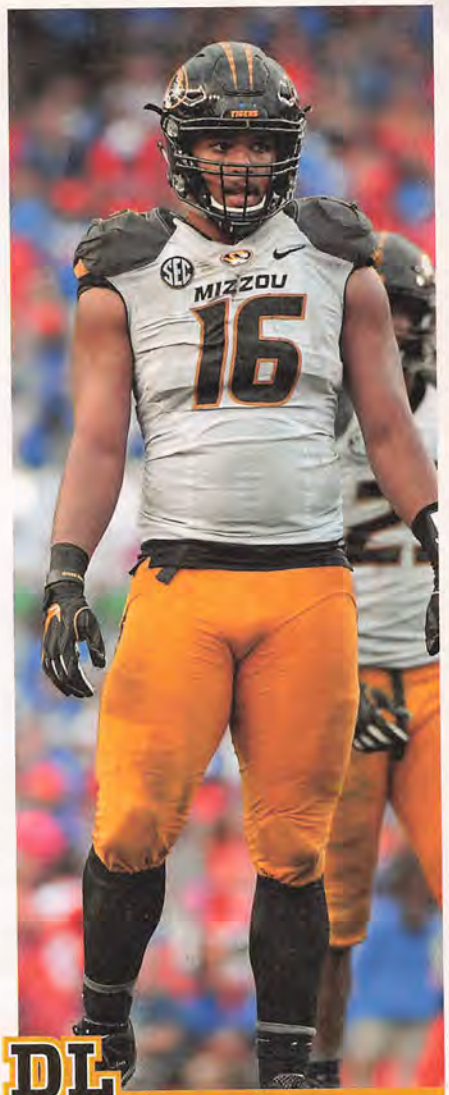
For the first time since 1908, the Tigers open with four straight home games with visits from Missouri State (coached by former MU defensive coordinator Dave Steckel), followed by South Carolina, Purdue and Auburn.

Purdue is part of a two-game home-and-away series. It will be the first regular-season Mizzou-Auburn meeting since the Tigers joined the SEC.

After a bye week, the Tigers play consecutive SEC road games at Kentucky and Georgia, then host Idaho for homecoming. MU completes another two-game non-conference series with a road trip to Connecticut, followed by back-to-back crucial division home games against Florida and Tennessee.

The Tigers close the regular season on the road with games at Vanderbilt and Arkansas. MU is the only SEC team with a pair of back-to-back conference road trips.

— Dave Matter



DL Marcell Frazier

Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack via AP

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.8	70
Rushing	177.9	53
Passing	189.1	99
Total	367.0	95

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.1	19
Rushing	133.7	27
Passing	212.7	39
Total	346.4	23

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 9	+ 0.64	20

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	13.6	126
Rushing	115.4	119
Passing	165.5	112
Total	280.9	124

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.2	5
Rushing	132.8	28
Passing	169.3	5
Total	302.0	6

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 1	- 0.08	T-79

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.4	48
Rushing	205.1	38
Passing	295.4	20
Total	500.5	13

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.5	T-90
Rushing	232.8	112
Passing	246.8	86
Total	479.7	118

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 3	- 0.25	T-85

NOTEBOOK

After firing defensive line coach **Jackie Shipp** late in the season, head coach **Barry Odom** hired Texas' **Brick Haley** to become the program's fourth D-line coach since the 2015 season. Haley, who previously coached at LSU, became an instant hit with the staff and players.

"The thing (the players have) latched onto is, coach Brick Haley is teaching them family," defensive coordinator **DeMontie Cross** said. "They're bonding. They believe in him. They believe in what he stands for. They just have to know somebody has their back."

When cornerbacks coach **Greg Brown** left the staff in January for Auburn, Odom replaced him with someone he knows well: **Brian Odom**, his younger brother. Brian Odom was a defensive quality control coach at Washington State. He took over the outside linebacker duties.

Ryan Walters, previously MU's safeties coach, now coaches the entire secondary.

• The 2018 in-state recruiting class is loaded with talent, and Mizzou hopes to capitalize on an unusually high number of elite prospects within the state border. In February, Mizzou hosted 10 in-state recruits on unofficial visits, including several widely ranked among the nation's top 100 players: Chaminade defensive tackle **Trevor Trout**, Christian Brothers College receiver **Kamryn Babb**, Parkway North defensive lineman **Michael Thompson Jr.** and Lutheran North defensive lineman **Ronnie Perkins.**

"Each time we talk to those young men we talk about representing the state," Cross said.

"There's no other place you can go and say, 'I'm representing my state.' Those guys are our focus. We don't need to start anywhere but here in the state and secure the borders because we have enough talent, especially in this 2018 class, to really put Mizzou back in position to dominate the SEC East and get back to Atlanta, as we all keep preaching."

• Wide receiver **Nate Brown** missed the 2016 season with an ankle injury that required surgery, then he injured his shoulder midway through spring practices, shutting him down for several practices and the final spring scrimmage. Brown was Mizzou's second-leading receiver in 2015 with 27 catches for 326 yards and a team-high four touchdowns. He was expected back for summer workouts in June.

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
3 Drew Lock	QB	6-4	225	Jr.	Lee's Summit
19 Jack Lowary	QB	6-4	215	Jr.	Huntington Beach, CA
9 Hayden Rymer	QB	6-1	210	Fr.	Windermere, FL
2 Micah Wilson	QB	6-3	215	Fr.	Tulsa, OK
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
16 Damarea Crockett	RB	5-11	225	So.	Little Rock, AR
22 Dawson Downing	RB	6-0	225	Fr.	Mission, KS
20 Myles Eaddy	RB	6-0	230	Fr.	Plantation, FL
43 Jerney Jones	RB	5-10	190	Fr.	Republic
4 Isaiah Miller	RB	5-11	195	Fr.	Baldwin, FL
29 Nate Strong	RB	6-0	210	Jr.	East St. Louis, IL
45 Ezra Vaoifi	RB	5-11	220	Fr.	Independence
21 Ish Witter	RB	5-10	195	Sr.	Tampa, FL
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
7 Nate Brown	WR	6-3	210	Jr.	Suwanee, GA
18 Dominic Collins	WR	6-2	180	Jr.	Lake Forest, CA
36 Daniel Ellinger	WR	6-4	210	Fr.	Jefferson City
17 Richaud Floyd	WR	5-11	185	So.	Gulfport, MS
84 Emanuel Hall	WR	6-3	200	Jr.	Franklin, TN
12 Johnathon Johnson	WR	5-10	185	So.	Memphis, TN
9 Dimetrios Mason	WR	6-0	185	So.	Loganville, GA
6 J'Mon Moore	WR	6-3	205	Sr.	Missouri City, TX
24 Cameren Rivers	WR	6-4	195	Sr.	St. Louis
8 Justin Smith	WR	6-7	210	So.	Dublin, GA
28 Steven Spadarotto	WR	6-2	185	Jr.	Santa Maria, CA
14 Ray Wingo	WR	5-11	175	Jr.	St. Louis
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
11 Kendall Blanton	TE	6-6	265	Jr.	Blue Springs
81 Albert Okwuegbunam	TE	6-5	260	Fr.	Springfield, IL
10 Jason Reese	TE	6-5	255	Sr.	Euless, TX
89 Brendan Scales	TE	6-4	240	Fr.	Wildwood
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
57 Alec Abeln	OL	6-3	305	Sr.	St. Louis
77 Paul Adams	OL	6-6	315	Jr.	Nashville, TN
56 Samson Bailey	OL	6-4	295	Jr.	Lamar
54 Trystan Castillo	OL	6-4	320	Fr.	Webb City
78 Pompey Coleman	OL	6-5	300	Fr.	Indianapolis, IN
67 Jonah Dubinski	OL	6-2	295	So.	Columbia
70 Yasir Durant	OL	6-7	340	So.	Philadelphia, PA
62 Thomas Grossman	OL	6-3	275	Jr.	St. Louis
69 AJ Harris	OL	6-4	305	So.	Stilwell, KS
76 Tyler Howell	OL	6-8	330	Sr.	Bonner Springs, KS
72 Kyle Mitchell	OL	6-5	325	Jr.	Fair Oaks, CA
71 Kevin Pendleton	OL	6-4	335	Jr.	Lee's Summit
66 Adam Ploudre	OL	6-4	320	Sr.	Ballwin
75 Tre'Vour Simms	OL	6-5	355	So.	East St. Louis, IL

Defensive Linemen	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
45 Franklin Agbasimere	DL	6-2	245	So.	Lagos, Nigeria
5 Terry Beckner, Jr.	DL	6-4	290	Jr.	East St. Louis, IL
95 Rashad Brandon	DL	6-3	305	Jr.	Jersey City, NJ
51 Ed Cruz	DL	6-2	240	Sr.	Park Hills
16 Marcell Frazier	DL	6-5	265	Sr.	Portland, OR
55 Jordan Harold	DL	6-2	265	Sr.	St. Louis
88 Nate Howard	DL	6-4	250	Jr.	St. Louis
94 Tyrell Jacobs	DL	6-4	280	So.	Kenner, LA
96 A.J. Logan	DL	6-2	325	Sr.	Columbia
61 Adam Roland	DL	6-3	320	Jr.	St. Louis
49 Markell Utsey	DL	6-4	310	So.	Little Rock, AR
13 Spencer Williams	DL	6-3	250	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
93 Tre Williams	DL	6-5	265	Fr.	Columbia
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
38 Eric Beisel	LB	6-3	240	Sr.	Fenton
34 Joey Burkett	LB	6-2	225	Sr.	Jefferson City
47 Cale Garrett	LB	6-3	240	So.	Kearney
24 Terez Hall	LB	6-2	230	Jr.	Lithonia, GA
55 Joe Hoy	LB	5-11	210	So.	Lake Villa, IL
15 Grant Jones	LB	6-3	225	Jr.	Columbia
4 Brandon Lee	LB	6-2	230	Jr.	Indianapolis, IN
6 Tavon Ross	LB	6-0	210	Jr.	Cochran, GA
46 Jacob Trump	LB	6-3	225	Jr.	Kahoka
2 TJ Warren	LB	5-11	210	So.	Conyers, GA
48 Roderick Winters	LB	5-11	240	Jr.	Arlington, TX
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
17 DeMarkus Acy	DB	6-2	195	So.	Dallas, TX
33 Jerod Alton	DB	5-10	180	Fr.	Kirkwood
35 Sean Boyd	DB	5-9	180	So.	St. Louis
28 Logan Cheadle	DB	5-10	180	Sr.	Lee's Summit
56 Ryan Dalley	S	6-1	190	So.	Mundelein, IL
7 Cam Hilton	S	6-0	190	Jr.	St. Louis
1 Anthony Hines	S	6-1	195	Sr.	South San Francisco, CA
21 Christian Holmes	DB	6-1	195	So.	Atlanta, GA
12 Dominic Nelson	S	6-0	205	Sr.	Florissant
3 Ronnell Perkins	S	6-0	205	So.	St. Louis
20 Kaleb Prewett	S	6-1	210	Jr.	Blue Springs
22 Anthony Sherrils	DB	6-0	205	Sr.	Kansas City
31 Finis Stribling IV	DB	5-11	190	Jr.	Thompson's Station, TN
8 Thomas Wilson	S	5-10	200	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
92 Nick Bartolotta	PK	5-6	185	Sr.	St. Louis
93 Andrew Carr	PK	6-1	185	Jr.	Cameron
26 Corey Fatony	P	5-11	205	Jr.	Franklin, TN
98 Tucker McCann	PK	6-0	205	So.	O'Fallon, IL
81 Harley Whitehouse	LS	6-0	225	So.	St. Louis
86 James Workman	LS	6-0	225	So.	Renton, WA

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the team:** "I think Missouri's got some players (despite going 4-8) on offense and defense. They just didn't play hard all the time or together (last season). Barry Odom's got to do what Gary Pinkel did, win some games you shouldn't win. They went to two SEC championship games with Pinkel. Either he did a helluva coaching job or that's an indictment on the rest of the East — you could interpret that either way."

• **On QB Drew Lock:** "Their quarterback is one of the upper-echelon quarterbacks in the league. I think he's a helluva thrower. And they've got some talented receivers, if they'd quit dropping the ball. What did they get against Tennessee — 740 yards? On offense, they do enough by spreading you out to give you problems. They can sling it."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Lock	12	133.3	237	434	10	54.6	3399	23	87	283.2
M. Zanders	8	190.6	10	12	0	83.3	114	1	34	14.2

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Moore	12	62	1012	16.3	8	82	84.3
D. Mason	12	47	587	12.5	3	57	48.9
J. Johnson	12	24	435	18.1	2	87	36.2

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Crockett	11	153	1076	14	1062	6.9	10	39	96.5
I. Witter	12	162	761	11	750	4.6	6	25	62.5
M. Zanders	8	35	211	13	198	5.7	2	31	24.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Newsom 73, C. Harris 61, T. Wilson 58
Tackles for loss: C. Harris 12, M. Frazier 9.5, C. Garrett 6, E. Beisel 6
Sacks: C. Harris 9, M. Frazier 7.5, D. Newsom 3
Interceptions: A. Penton 5, J. Gibson 3, J. Burkett 2

247SPORTS TIGERS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Da'ron Davis, WR

The three-star recruit split time in high school between running back and receiver. However, look for the 6-2, 190-pound prospect to settle in nicely as a wide receiver on Missouri's offense. Davis has speed and toughness to do battle in the SEC.

Malik Young, DL

The 6-3, 280-pound prospect could play both end and tackle on the defensive front. Young has good quickness and is powerfully built, which allows him to play multiple positions along the line. Missouri is looking for Young to earn significant snaps this fall.

Walter Palmore, DT

This junior college recruit is another player Missouri is looking to make an immediate impact on the field this fall. At 6-4, 300 pounds, Palmore is physically ready to compete in the SEC trenches as a defensive tackle. He is a strong lineman that will plug up the middle.

SLEEPER

Larry Rountree III, RB

The three-star recruit jumped on Missouri's offer late in the cycle. However, the stout 5-10, 183-pound prospect looks primed to surprise many as he knifes his way through the slightest opening and does a good job running behind his pads. Look for Roundtree III to be a weapon in the passing attack as well.

2018 NEEDS

Missouri is looking for offensive playmakers in the 2018 class, specifically more elite receivers. The Tigers need vertical threats to get back to their scoring ways. There are several potential impact players in-state, and the Tigers need to do a better job at selling them on staying home.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	0	24	1
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Commitments	25
Average Stars	2.96
Total Stars	74
National Rank: 51	SEC: 13

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Nathaniel Anderson	DE	6-4	250	✪✪✪	Prattville, AL	New Mexico Military
As a sophomore, had 31 tackles, including 13.5 tackles for loss, five quarterback sacks, one fumble caused and one fumble recovered… Had 32 tackles, including 5.5 tackles for loss, as a freshman.						
Joshuah Bledsoe	S	6-0	191	✪✪✪	Houston, TX	Dekaney
Ranked No. 110 safety nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 30 tackles and two interceptions as a senior… Scored 12 total touchdowns, including nine rushing and one receiving.						
Larry Borom	OL	6-5	338	✪✪✪	Bloomfield Hills, MI	Brother Rice
247Sports.com rated No. 79 offensive guard nationally and No. 42 player in Michigan.						
Rashad Brandon	DT	6-3	305	✪✪✪	Jersey City, NJ	ASA College (NY)
Ranked No. 15 junior college defensive tackle nationally by 247Sports.com… As a sophomore, had 34 tackles, including 6.5 tackles for loss, 3.5 quarterback sacks, and one fumble recovered.						
Jamal Brooks	LB	6-1	227	✪✪✪	Bessemer, AL	Bessemer City
247Sports.com rated No. 42 inside linebacker nationally and No. 43 player in Alabama… Led state of Alabama with 168 tackles as a junior… Had two interceptions and eight fumbles caused.						
Logan Christopherson	TE	6-6	220	✪✪✪	Lemont, IL	Lemont
Ranked No. 37 tight end nationally and No. 13 player in Illinois by 247Sports.com.						
O'Shae Clark	WR	5-8	160	✪✪✪	Cypress, TX	Cypress Springs
247Sports.com rated No. 35 all-purpose back nationally… All-State… As a senior, had 70 receptions for 1,736 yards and 18 touchdowns, averaging 24.8 yards per reception.						
Pompey Coleman	OL	6-5	270	✪✪✪	Indianapolis, IN	Ben Davis
Ranked No. 68 offensive tackle nationally and No. 7 player in Indiana by 247Sports.com… Missed majority of senior season due to leg injury.						
Case Cook	OL	6-5	290	✪✪✪	Carrollton, GA	Carrollton
247Sports.com rated No. 5 center nationally and No. 56 player in Georgia… All-State.						
Da'Ron Davis	WR	6-2	190	✪✪✪	Lee's Summit	Lee's Summit North
247Sports.com rated No. 20 athlete nationally and No. 4 player in Missouri… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… All-State… As a senior, had 56 receptions for 703 yards and five touchdowns, averaging 12.6 yards per reception.						
Yasir Durant	OL	6-7	328	✪✪✪	Philadelphia, PA	Arizona Western C.C.
Ranked No. 3 junior college offensive guard nationally by 247Sports.com… Helped team to 15-0 record and state championship as a senior.						
Tyree Gillespie	S	6-0	202	✪✪✪	Ocala, FL	Vanguard
As a senior, had 40 tackles and two interceptions… Had 555 yards rushing and seven touchdowns on 39 carries, averaging 14.2 yards per carry… Returned one punt 43 yards for a touchdown.						
Aubrey Miller, Jr.	LB	6-2	210	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Whitehaven
247Sports.com rated No. 20 player in Tennessee… Played in Blue-Grey All-American Game… Helped team to 15-0 record and state championship as a senior… Had 147 tackles, including 21 tackles for loss, seven quarterback sacks, five fumbles caused, and four interceptions, including two returned for touchdowns as a senior.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Isaiah Miller	RB	5-11	191	✪✪✪	Baldwin, FL	Baldwin
Ranked No. 29 all-purpose back nationally by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 1,225 yards rushing and 14 touchdowns… Had 16 receptions for 227 yards… Returned three kickoffs for 123 yards… All-State as a junior in Michigan.						
Walter Palmore	DT	6-4	300	✪✪✪	Columbus, GA	Eastern Arizona College
247Sports.com rated No. 7 junior college defensive tackle nationally… Had 35 tackles, including 1.5 tackles for loss, three quarterback sacks, and one fumble caused as a sophomore… As a freshman, had 36 tackles and five quarterback sacks… Redshirted in 2014 at Coffeyville Community College.						
Terry Petry	CB	6-1	160	✪✪✪	Missouri City, TX	Ridge Point
Ranked No. 65 cornerback nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 75 career tackles, six interceptions and 20 passes broken up… Had 73 career receptions and 24 touchdowns, averaging 23.9 yards per reception… As a senior, had 23 tackles, six passes broken up, two interceptions, one fumble caused, and two fumbles recovered.						
Taylor Powell	QB	6-2	195	✪✪✪	Fayetteville, AR	Fayetteville
247Sports.com rated No. 6 player in Arkansas… Gatorade Arkansas Player of the Year… Led team to two consecutive state championships in 2015 and 2016… Had 10,413 career passing yards and 113 touchdowns… Completed 237 of 348 passes for 3,473 yards and 44 touchdowns as a senior… Scored seven rushing touchdowns.						
Larry Rountree, III	RB	5-10	183	✪✪✪	Raleigh, NC	Millbrook
Ranked No. 56 running back nationally and No. 32 player in North Carolina by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 1,147 yards rushing and 21 touchdowns… Averaged 33.8 yards per kickoff return.						
Caleb Sampson	DT	6-4	285	✪✪✪	Covington, LA	Northlake Christian
247Sports.com rated No. 69 player in Louisiana… Had 31 tackles (29 solo) and 2.5 quarterback sacks as a senior… As a junior, had 30 tackles, 2.5 quarterback sacks, and one interception.						
Adam Sparks	CB	6-0	163	✪✪✪	Baton Rouge, LA	Dutchtown
Ranked No. 92 cornerback nationally and No. 35 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com.						
Chris Turner	DE	6-4	225	✪✪✪	Hammond, LA	Hammond
247Sports.com rated No. 69 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 46 player in Louisiana… District Defensive Most Valuable Player.						
Jordan Ulmer	S	6-2	190	✪✪✪	Belleville, MI	Belleville
Ranked No. 25 player in Michigan by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 83 tackles, including four tackles for loss, nine passes broken up, and four interceptions.						
Hyrin Morrison White	OL	6-6	300	✪✪✪	DeSoto, TX	DeSoto
247Sports.com rated No. 59 offensive tackle nationally and No. 80 player in Texas… Helped team to 16-0 record and No. 11 ranking nationally as a senior… All-District.						
Kobie Whiteside	DE	6-1	304	✪✪	Houston, TX	Alief Taylor
As a senior, had 95 tackles, including 19 tackles for loss, seven quarterback sacks, one fumble caused, and one interception returned for touchdown.						
Malik Young	DT	6-3	280	✪✪✪	Marietta, GA	Eastern Arizona College
Ranked No. 6 junior college defensive tackle nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 65 tackles and 1.5 quarterback sacks as a sophomore… As a junior, had 46 tackles, 2.5 quarterback sacks, and two kicks blocked… Graduated from high school in 2013.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Crockett Ready for his Close-Up

Damarea Crockett set a Mizzou freshman rushing record with 225 yards at Tennessee on Nov. 19 in the penultimate game of the regular season. Walking out of the locker room at Neyland Stadium, Crockett was already talking about the chance to play Arkansas a week later.

The Little Rock, Ark., native didn't receive a scholarship offer from the home-state Razorbacks, who were coming to Columbia for the Battle Line Rivalry. He'd serve vengeance in black and gold.

But hours after the Tigers came home from Tennessee, Crockett was arrested for marijuana possession, leading to a one-week suspension that ended his freshman year. He wasn't allowed to be in the stadium for Mizzou's comeback victory over the Hogs.

Well, that's all motivation now.

"It made me a completely different person," Crockett said in the spring. "It's changed me for the good and made me a way better person and a football player. It made my focus that much stronger and will make my comeback that much stronger, too.

"It was a mistake and I let my team down. I've apologized to them and Mizzou as a whole. We've moved past that."

Crockett had only two touches in MU's first game and didn't play in the final game, but he still rushed for a Mizzou freshman record 1,062 yards. He became one of the SEC's most efficient runners and explosive playmakers, averaging 6.9 yards per carry, which ranked third among SEC running backs with at least 50 carries.

Crockett was even better in SEC games and averaged 7.3 yards per carry in conference play. Only LSU's Derrius Guice had more 10-yard runs than Crockett's 35 among all SEC running backs.

"He's attacked the offseason like I hoped he would," Missouri coach Barry Odom said. "He wants to have a better sophomore year than he did freshman season. He's determined to do that in all walks of his life."

RB
Damarea Crockett
Photo by Joe Robbins

Mizzou will work other backs into the rotation this year — senior Ish Witter is a proven blocker and receiver out of the backfield — but Crockett will see the bulk of the carries.

"Honestly, just to top my freshman year, there's nothing I can do but put in more work," Crockett said.

"I don't expect anything less than being great. That's what I'm holding myself accountable to. If you're not trying to be the best, why are you playing?"

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/missouri

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB DREW LOCK

In his second season as MU's starter — but first in coordinator Josh Heupel's system — Lock ranked second in the SEC in passing yards (3,399) and third in TD passes (23) during an up-and-down year. ... He lifted his completion percentage from 49.0 as a freshman to 54.6 and his efficiency rating from 90.5 to 133.3, although he struggled against the better defenses. ... Lock has five 300-yard passing games in 20 career starts.

EMERGING STAR

WR DIMETRIOS MASON

A late addition to Mizzou's 2016 recruiting class, Mason earned a starting job with a strong preseason camp and became a counterpart to leading receiver J'Mon Moore with 47 catches for 587 yards, three TDs. ... Mason lines up exclusively on the right side of the field and can stretch defenses with deep-catch ability and after-the-catch speed on shorter throws. ... Mason's best game came against Kentucky: four catches for 101 yards, two TDs.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT RASHAD BRANDON

Mizzou loaded up on junior college D-linemen and managed to get Brandon to enroll early for spring practices. ... Brandon quickly climbed the depth chart, starting the spring game and leading all linemen with five tackles, including a stop behind the line. ... Brandon, a native of Jersey City, N.J., transferred from ASA College in Brooklyn.

2016 SEC LEADERS

PASS EFFICIENCY	G	CMP	ATT	INT	PCT.	YDS	TD	EFFIC.
1. Joshua Dobbs, Tennessee	13	225	357	12	63.0	2946	27	150.59
2. Chad Kelly, Mississippi	9	205	328	8	62.5	2758	19	147.38
3. Austin Allen, Arkansas	13	245	401	15	61.1	3430	25	146.04
4. Sean White, Auburn	11	133	208	3	63.9	1679	9	143.14
5. Jalen Hurts, Alabama	15	240	382	9	62.8	2780	23	139.12
6. Danny Etling, LSU	11	160	269	5	59.5	2123	11	135.54
7. Drew Lock, Missouri	12	237	434	10	54.6	3399	23	133.28
8. Stephen Johnson, Kentucky	12	145	265	6	54.7	2037	13	130.95
9. Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State	13	196	361	10	54.3	2423	21	124.33
10. Trevor Knight, Texas A&M	11	193	362	7	53.3	2432	19	123.20

RUSHING	G	ATT	YDS	AVG.	TD	YDS/G
1. Kamryn Pettway, Auburn	10	209	1224	5.86	7	122.40
2. Derrius Guice, LSU	12	183	1387	7.58	15	115.58
3. Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State	13	195	1375	7.05	16	105.77
4. Rawleigh Williams III, Arkansas	13	245	1360	5.55	12	104.62
5. Ralph Webb, Vanderbilt	13	250	1283	5.13	13	98.69
6. Damarea Crockett, Missouri	11	153	1062	6.94	10	96.55
7. Stanley Boom Williams, Kentucky	13	171	1170	6.84	7	90.00
8. Nick Chubb, Georgia	13	224	1130	5.04	8	86.92
9. Benjamin Snell, Jr., Kentucky	13	186	1091	5.87	13	83.92
10. Trayveon Williams, Texas A&M	13	156	1057	6.78	8	81.31

TOTAL OFFENSE	G	RUSH	PASS	PLAYS	TOT	YDS/G
1. Chad Kelly, Mississippi	9	332	2758	409	3090	343.3
2. Drew Lock, Missouri	12	123	3399	486	3522	293.5
3. Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State	13	1375	2423	556	3798	292.2
4. Joshua Dobbs, Tennessee	13	831	2946	507	3777	290.5
5. Trevor Knight, Texas A&M	11	614	2432	464	3046	276.9
6. Austin Allen, Arkansas	13	-126	3430	466	3304	254.2
7. Jalen Hurts, Alabama	15	954	2780	573	3734	248.9
8. Danny Etling, LSU	11	46	2123	310	2169	197.2
9. Stephen Johnson, Kentucky	12	327	2037	362	2364	197.0
10. Jacob Eason, Georgia	13	-45	2430	403	2385	183.5

INTERCEPTIONS	G	NO.	YDS	TD	AVG/G
1. Minkah Fitzpatrick, Alabama	15	6	186	2	0.40
2. Aarion Penton, Missouri	12	5	82	1	0.42
3. Teez Tabor, Florida	12	4	47	1	0.33
3. Justin Evans, Texas A&M	13	4	0	0	0.31
5. John Gibson, Missouri	11	3	20	0	0.27
5. Zedrick Woods, Mississippi	12	3	71	1	0.25
5. Joshua Holsey, Auburn	12	3	47	0	0.25
5. Jamoral Graham, Mississippi State	13	3	105	1	0.23
5. Chauncey Gardner, Florida	13	3	103	1	0.23
5. Quincy Wilson, Florida	13	3	80	1	0.23

SCORING	G	TD	FG	XPT	2XP	PTS	PTS/G
1. Daniel Carlson, Auburn	13	1	28	44	0	134	10.3
2. Gary Wunderlich, Mississippi	12	0	22	41	0	107	8.9
3. Adam Griffith, Alabama	15	0	21	66	0	129	8.6
4. Daniel LaCamera, Texas A&M	13	0	17	54	0	105	8.1
5. Derrius Guice, LSU	12	16	0	0	0	96	8.0
6. Nick Fitzgerald, Mississippi State	13	16	0	0	0	96	7.4
7. Eddy Pineiro, Florida	13	0	21	32	0	95	7.3
8. Aaron Medley, Tennessee	13	0	11	61	0	94	7.2
9. Austin MacGinnis, Kentucky	13	0	16	44	0	92	7.1
9. Alvin Kamara, Tennessee	11	13	0	0	0	78	7.1

PUNTING	G	NO.	YDS	AVG.
1. Johnny Townsend, Florida	13	64	3065	47.89
2. JK Scott, Alabama	15	64	3020	47.19
3. Trevor Daniel, Tennessee	13	70	3120	44.57
4. Toby Baker, Arkansas	12	57	2532	44.42
5. Corey Fatony, Missouri	12	66	2894	43.85
6. Shane Tripucka, Texas A&M	13	69	2962	42.93
7. Sean Kelly, South Carolina	13	72	3062	42.53
8. Kevin Phillips, Auburn	11	45	1902	42.27
9. Sam Loy, Vanderbilt	13	68	2832	41.65
10. Josh Growden, LSU	12	57	2357	41.35

RECEIVING YDS/GAME	G	REC.	YDS	TD	YDS/G
1. J'Mon Moore, Missouri	12	62	1012	8	84.3
2. Evan Engram, Mississippi	11	65	926	8	84.2
3. Josh Reynolds, Texas A&M	13	61	1039	12	79.9
4. Deebo Samuel, South Carolina	10	59	783	1	78.3
5. Josh Malone, Tennessee	13	50	972	11	74.8
6. ArDarius Stewart, Alabama	12	54	864	8	72.0
7. Christian Kirk, Texas A&M	13	83	928	9	71.4
8. Fred Ross, Mississippi State	13	72	917	12	70.5
9. Keon Hatcher, Arkansas	12	44	743	8	61.9
10. Antonio Callaway, Florida	12	54	721	3	60.1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

TOTAL OFFENSE	G	RUSH	PASS	PLAY	TOT	YDS/G
1. Missouri	12	2461	3545	948	6006	500.5
2. Texas A&M	13	2754	3317	953	6071	467.0
3. Mississippi	12	1793	3779	905	5572	464.3
4. Alabama	15	3675	3154	1056	6829	455.3
5. Tennessee	13	2668	3100	896	5768	443.7
6. Auburn	13	3527	2203	934	5730	440.8
7. Mississippi State	13	2997	2726	943	5723	440.2
8. Arkansas	13	2135	3434	923	5569	428.4
9. LSU	12	2796	2281	757	5077	423.1
10. Kentucky	13	3044	2419	872	5463	420.2
11. Georgia	13	2486	2515	919	5001	384.7
12. Vanderbilt	13	2135	2486	891	4621	355.5
13. South Carolina	13	1747	2771	877	4518	347.5
14. Florida	13	1667	2805	862	4472	344.0

SCORING OFFENSE	G	TD	FG	XPT	2XP	SAF	PTS	AVG
1. Alabama	15	74	22	72	0	0	582	38.8
2. Tennessee	13	63	11	62	0	0	473	36.4
3. Texas A&M	13	57	17	54	2	1	453	34.8
4. Mississippi	12	47	22	41	1	0	391	32.6
5. Missouri	12	52	6	45	1	0	377	31.4
6. Auburn	13	46	28	44	0	1	406	31.2
7. Mississippi State	13	52	11	48	1	0	395	30.4
8. Arkansas	13	51	13	45	2	0	394	30.3
9. Kentucky	13	49	16	44	2	0	390	30.0
10. LSU	12	44	11	41	0	1	340	28.3
11. Georgia	13	38	17	36	1	1	319	24.5
12. Florida	13	35	21	32	2	1	311	23.9
13. Vanderbilt	13	36	15	36	0	1	299	23.0
14. South Carolina	13	33	13	31	1	0	270	20.8

RUSHING OFFENSE	G	ATT	YDS	AVG.	TD	YDS/G
1. Auburn	13	645	3527	5.47	33	271.31
2. Alabama	15	639	3675	5.75	33	245.00
3. Kentucky	13	560	3044	5.44	30	234.15
4. LSU	12	459	2796	6.09	30	233.00
5. Mississippi State	13	532	2997	5.63	24	230.54
6. Texas A&M	13	484	2754	5.69	28	211.85
7. Tennessee	13	517	2668	5.16	31	205.23
8. Missouri	12	500	2461	4.92	24	205.08
9. Georgia	13	533	2486	4.66	18	191.23
10. Vanderbilt	13	497	2135	4.30	26	164.23
10. Arkansas	13	517	2135	4.13	21	164.23
12. Mississippi	12	422	1793	4.25	17	149.42
13. South Carolina	13	475	1747	3.68	20	134.38
14. Florida	13	452	1667	3.69	11	128.23

PASS OFFENSE	G	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	AVG	TD	INT	YDS/G
1. Mississippi	12	483	289	59.8	3779	7.8	27	14	314.9
2. Missouri	12	448	249	55.6	3545	7.9	25	10	295.4
3. Arkansas	13	406	247	60.8	3434	8.5	26	15	264.2
4. Texas A&M	13	469	255	54.4	3317	7.1	25	9	255.2
5. Tennessee	13	379	238	62.8	3100	8.2	28	12	238.5
6. Florida	13	410	241	58.8	2805	6.8	18	15	215.8
7. South Carolina	13	402	248	61.7	2771	6.9	12	7	213.2
8. Alabama	15	417	265	63.5	3154	7.6	26	9	210.3
9. Mississippi State	13	411	230	56.0	2726	6.6	24	10	209.7
10. Georgia	13	386	212	54.9	2515	6.5	16	9	193.5
11. Vanderbilt	13	394	210	53.3	2486	6.3	9	11	191.2
12. LSU	12	298	174	58.4	2281	7.7	12	7	190.1
13. Kentucky	13	312	170	54.5	2419	7.8	17	12	186.1
14. Auburn	13	289	178	61.6	2203	7.6	12	6	169.5

TOTAL DEFENSE	G	RUSH	PASS	PLAY	TOT	YDS/G
1. Alabama	15	959	2968	983	3927	261.8
2. Florida	13	1875	1931	816	3806	292.8
3. LSU	12	1407	2366	793	3773	314.4
4. Georgia	13	1868	2389	809	4257	327.5
5. Auburn	13	1726	2979	928	4705	361.9
6. Vanderbilt	13	2126	3180	899	5306	408.2
7. South Carolina	13	2642	2713	953	5355	411.9
8. Arkansas	13	2671	2875	822	5546	426.6
9. Kentucky	13	2966	2679	928	5645	434.2
10. Texas A&M	13	2493	3250	1035	5743	441.8
11. Tennessee	13	2841	2999	1000	5840	449.2
12. Mississippi State	13	2308	3660	957	5968	459.1
13. Mississippi	12	2956	2579	896	5535	461.3
14. Missouri	12	2794	2962	949	5756	479.7

SCORING DEFENSE	G	TD	FG	XPT	2XP	SAF	PTS	AVG
1. Alabama	15	21	16	19	1	0	195	13.0
2. LSU	12	16	25	12	3	0	189	15.8
3. Florida	13	27	10	26	0	0	218	16.8
4. Auburn	13	23	21	21	0	0	222	17.1
5. Vanderbilt	13	37	19	33	0	0	312	24.0
5. Georgia	13	41	9	39	0	0	312	24.0
7. Texas A&M	13	38	19	32	1	0	319	24.5
8. South Carolina	13	44	12	40	2	0	344	26.5
9. Tennessee	13	48	14	45	0	0	375	28.8
10. Arkansas	13	54	9	51	1	0	404	31.1
11. Kentucky	13	50	19	48	1	0	407	31.3
12. Missouri	12	49	12	48	0	0	378	31.5
13. Mississippi State	13	53	15	44	3	0	413	31.8
14. Mississippi	12	50	20	48	0	0	408	34.0

RUSHING DEFENSE	G	ATT	YARDS	AVG.	TD	YDS/G
1. Alabama	15	476	959	2.01	5	63.93
2. LSU	12	429	1407	3.28	7	117.25
3. Auburn	13	462	1726	3.74	8	132.77
4. Georgia	13	470	1868	3.97	24	143.69
5. Florida	13	488	1875	3.84	16	144.23
6. Vanderbilt	13	455	2126	4.67	14	163.54
7. Mississippi State	13	485	2308	4.76	17	177.54
8. Texas A&M	13	573	2493	4.35	21	191.77
9. South Carolina	13	550	2642	4.80	20	203.23
10. Arkansas	13	452	2671	5.91	39	205.46
11. Tennessee	13	568	2841	5.00	28	218.54
12. Kentucky	13	576	2966	5.15	25	228.15
13. Missouri	12	531	2794	5.26	28	232.83
14. Mississippi	12	546	2956	5.41	31	246.33

PASS DEFENSE	G	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	AVG	TD	INT	YDS/G
1. Florida	13	328	148	45.1	1931	5.9	8	16	148.5
2. Georgia	13	339	200	59.0	2389	7.0	14	15	183.8
3. LSU	12	364	194	53.3	2366	6.5	9	9	197.2
4. Alabama	15	507	273	53.8	2968	5.9	15	16	197.9
5. Kentucky	13	352	202	57.4	2679	7.6	20	13	206.1
6. South Carolina	13	403	243	60.3	2713	6.7	20	15	208.7
7. Mississippi	12	350	206	58.9	2579	7.4	15	8	214.9
8. Arkansas	13	370	218	58.9	2875	7.8	12	10	221.2
9. Auburn	13	466	270	57.9	2979	6.4	14	11	229.2
10. Tennessee	13	432	238	55.1	2999	6.9	18	11	230.7
11. Vanderbilt	13	444	271	61.0	3180	7.2	20	5	244.6
12. Missouri	12	418	241	57.7	2962	7.1	17	15	246.8
13. Texas A&M	13	462	272	58.9	3250	7.0	16	12	250.0
14. Mississippi State	13	472	291	61.7	3660	7.8	33	14	281.5

KICKOFF RETURNS	G	NO	YDS	TD	AVG.
1. South Carolina	13	32	825	1	25.78
2. Tennessee	13	42	1045	1	24.88
3. Vanderbilt	13	36	850	0	23.61
4. Texas A&M	13	41	967	0	23.59
5. Mississippi	12	37	839	0	22.68
6. Florida	13	26	580	1	22.31
7. Kentucky	13	39	863	0	22.13
8. Mississippi State	13	42	868	0	20.67
9. Georgia	13	29	585	1	20.17
10. Alabama	15	28	547	0	19.54
11. LSU	12	24	459	0	19.13
12. Auburn	13	23	438	0	19.04
13. Missouri	12	43	811	0	18.86
14. Arkansas	13	37	688	0	18.59

PUNT RETURN AVG	G	NO	YDS	TD	AVG.
1. Texas A&M	13	14	355	4	25.36
2. Alabama	15	34	528	4	15.53
3. Missouri	12	26	293	1	11.27
4. Tennessee	13	33	367	1	11.12
5. Auburn	13	16	171	0	10.69
6. Georgia	13	23	245	1	10.65
7. Arkansas	13	17	143	0	8.41
8. Kentucky	13	16	131	1	8.19
9. LSU	12	24	186	1	7.75
10. Vanderbilt	13	18	138	0	7.67
11. Florida	13	32	242	0	7.56
12. South Carolina	13	14	89	0	6.36
13. Mississippi	12	10	60	0	6.00
14. Mississippi State	13	19	76	0	4.00

PUNTING	G	NO	YDS	AVG	PTS/G	YDS/G
1. Florida	13	65	3065	47.15	5.0	235.8
2. Alabama	15	65	3045	46.85	4.3	203.0
3. Tennessee	13	70	3120	44.57	5.4	240.0
4. Arkansas	13	59	2626	44.51	4.5	202.0
5. Missouri	12	66	2894	43.85	5.5	241.2
6. Texas A&M	13	71	3056	43.04	5.5	235.1
7. Mississippi	12	54	2323	43.02	4.5	193.6
8. South Carolina	13	74	3150	42.57	5.7	242.3
9. Auburn	13	48	1994	41.54	3.7	153.4
10. LSU	12	57	2357	41.35	4.8	196.4
11. Vanderbilt	13	73	2922	40.03	5.6	224.8
12. Mississippi State	13	63	2453	38.94	4.8	188.7
13. Kentucky	13	61	2335	38.28	4.7	179.6
14. Georgia	13	69	2590	37.54	5.3	199.2

TURNOVER MARGIN	G	+FUM	+INT	TOT	FUM	-INT	-TOT	MAR
1. Alabama	15	13	16	29	10	9	19	10
2. Georgia	13	12	15	27	10	9	19	8
3. South Carolina	13	12	15	27	13	7	20	7
3. Mississippi State	13	9	14	23	6	10	16	7
5. Vanderbilt	13	14	5	19	4	11	15	4
6. Texas A&M	13	12	12	24	12	9	21	3
6. Auburn	13	6	11	17	8	6	14	3
8. Florida	13	8	16	24	7	15	22	2
9. LSU	12	8	9	17	10	7	17	0
10. Tennessee	13	13	11	24	14	12	26	-2
11. Missouri	12	5	15	20	13	10	23	-3
11. Mississippi	12	8	8	16	5	14	19	-3
13. Arkansas	13	11	10	21	10	15	25	-4
14. Kentucky	13	8	13	21	16	12	28	-7

TEAM STATISTICS

SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

For more coverage of the Gamecocks, visit southcarolina.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Kurt Roper, Bryan McClendon **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Travaris Robinson **STADIUM:** Williams-Brice Stadium: 80,250

MUSCHAMP MOMENTUM: GAMECOCKS MAKING GAINS

South Carolina overachieved in coach Will Muschamp's first season, based on most outsiders' predictions. When he sat at the table following a Birmingham Bowl loss — a postseason berth many thought the Gamecocks would never make — Muschamp had a clear message.

"We have a long way to go," he said.

After that overtime defeat to USF, Muschamp didn't trumpet the fact that his team had been picked to finish last in the SEC East. Instead, he recognized the long road ahead before his team can contend for any sort of championship.

The challenges were numerous for the first-year coaching staff, which bemoaned the lack of depth and team speed they had at their disposal. There was little to work with on defense, and even less on offense, but Muschamp led his squad to wins over the teams they should have beaten and pulled an upset over Tennessee, which ended up earning the Gamecocks a bowl bid.

But this is Year 2 for Muschamp and while his own expectations of championships remain unchanged, outside expectations have risen. Through recruiting and the development of young talent, the 2017 Gamecocks should have enough in the cupboard to do more than hope for a bowl berth.

Ten starters return on offense from a team that relied on a freshman quarterback and two freshman running backs, along with three sophomores and a freshman catching the bulk of the passes. Muschamp saw development over the course of last season and even more growth in the spring.

"I think we're just farther along. I'd credit another year in the system with a very young team," Muschamp said. "They understand how important the meeting room is, and they've taken that to the field. We've got some mature guys who understand what it takes to be successful."

Defensively, though, the Gamecocks have a long way to go. Even with linebacker Skai Moore's return from injury, the play has to improve markedly. South Carolina will count on newcomers.

"Defensively, we have unknowns as we go into fall camp, which is concerning as a coach," Muschamp said. "Some guys who aren't on campus are going to need to help us, play for us, and that's not always good leaving spring ball."

OFFENSE

Muschamp's teams at Florida were known for being inept offensively and, specifically, for failing to find a quarterback. The feeling after spring practice is that this team will score, and it will do so behind leader Jake Bentley.

Bentley, who started the final seven games, set three Birmingham Bowl passing records. For the season, he completed 125 of 190 passes for 1,420 yards with nine touchdowns but, the son of a coach, he earns more praise for his leadership ability and work ethic.

He has a group of skill players around him who are all back from a year ago, with a few added bonuses. At running back, Rico Dowdle was the first freshman to lead the team in rushing — 764 yards and six touchdowns in only nine games — since Marcus Lattimore. A.J. Turner is back as well, but UNC transfer Ty'Son Williams turned heads this spring.

"I think he's had a really good spring camp," Muschamp said of Williams. "He's a one-cut, violent runner, north and south with his pads. I'm very pleased with his progress; he has a great work ethic, great attitude and is a talented player."

Top wide receivers Deebo Samuel and Bryan Edwards are complemented by tight ends Hayden Hurst and K.C. Crosby. Samuel finished the year strong, catching 14 passes for 190 yards in the bowl game. Hurst set a school record for tight ends in both catches and yards; Edwards and Crosby tied for the team lead in touchdown receptions.

"I think our offense has grown tremendously," Bentley said. "I've always said we have explosive players. We have a vast amount of playmakers we can put on the field. It's great for us to have those guys and everyone is just more comfortable being a year in."

The offensive line is the biggest question mark as first-year position coach Eric Wolford takes over a group that was last in the SEC in sacks allowed and 13th in rushing. Right tackle Zack Bailey, who moved from left guard, is the most talented of the group. He's athletic, physical and a leader both by

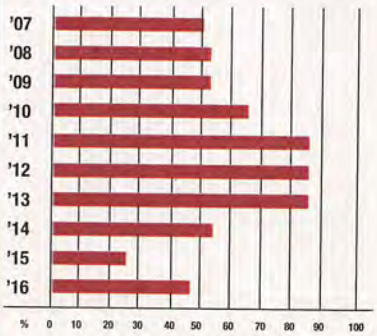
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	vs. NC State (Charlotte, NC)	7-6
Sept. 9	at Missouri	4-8
Sept. 16	KENTUCKY	7-6
Sept. 23	LOUISIANA TECH	9-5
Sept. 30	at Texas A&M	8-5
Oct. 7	ARKANSAS	7-6
Oct. 14	at Tennessee	9-4
Oct. 28	VANDERBILT	6-7
Nov. 4	at Georgia	8-5
Nov. 11	FLORIDA	9-4
Nov. 18	WOFFORD	10-4
Nov. 25	CLEMSON	14-1

RESULTS

	6-7, 3-5	
W	at Vanderbilt	13-10
L	at Mississippi State	14-27
W	EAST CAROLINA	20-15
L	at Kentucky	10-17
L	TEXAS A&M	13-24
L	GEORGIA	14-28
W	MASSACHUSETTS	34-28
W	TENNESSEE	24-21
W	MISSOURI	31-21
L	at Florida	7-20
W	WESTERN CAROLINA	44-31
L	at Clemson	7-56
	Birmingham Bowl	
L	South Florida (OT)	39-46

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Columbia, S.C.

2016:
6-7 overall, 3-5 SEC (5th, East)

COACH:
Will Muschamp — At South Carolina: 6-7, 1 year; overall: 34-28, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
16; 10 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jake Bentley, WR Deebo Samuel, TE Hayden Hurst, OL Zack Bailey, DT Taylor Stallworth, LB Skai Moore, LB Bryson Allen-Williams

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
South Carolina has quietly assembled a strong supporting cast around Bentley, who has a pair of running backs along with several wide receivers and tight ends to lean on. On defense, the Gamecocks have experience at linebacker — thanks to Moore's return — and in the secondary.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The offensive line was the worst in the SEC in sacks allowed (41) and have a new position coach to try to fix the problems, but there's a long way to go. The defensive line is a major question mark in terms of depth and athleticism.

KEY LOSSES:
LT Mason Zandi, DE Darius English, PK Elliott Fry, P Sean Kelly

OVERVIEW:
Contrary to Muschamp's reputation, South Carolina should have an offense to rank among the best in the SEC, but a defense that could give up a lot of points. Depth and talent is a concern on the defensive side of the ball as the group is not particularly fast or athletic, a point that Muschamp bemoaned throughout the spring.

KEY NUMBER:
118 South Carolina's national ranking last season in sacks allowed, which will have to improve for Bentley and the offense to play up to its potential. The Gamecocks were 13th in the SEC in rushing behind that offensive line.

QB
Jake
BENTLEY

Photo by Jim Dedmon-USA TODAY Sports...

WR
Deebo Samuel
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Jake Bentley***	So.	Second-year starter with little depth behind him.	Michael Scarnecchia, Jr.
RB	**Rico Dowdle***	So.	Team-leading rusher and returning starter at a deep position.	Ty'Son Williams, So.
WR	**Deebo Samuel***	Jr.	Had at least one TD receiving, rushing, passing and returning last year.	Chavis Dawkins, So.
WR	**Bryan Edwards***	So.	Second-most catches, yards (44, 590) for a freshman in school history.	Randrecous Davis, Fr.
WR	**K.C. Crosby***	Jr.	More of a tight end, Crosby had a team-high four receiving TDs.	Korey Banks, So.
TE	**Hayden Hurst***	Jr.	A likely NFL Draft pick after this season; a former MLB Draft selection.	Kiel Pollard, So.
LT	**Malik Young***	Jr.	Last year's starting right tackle praised for athleticism and toughness.	Sadarius Hutcherson, Fr.
LG	D.J. Park	Sr.	Has played four positions on the OL, but only started three games.	Donell Stanley, Jr.
C	**Alan Knott***	Sr.	Three-year starter struggled with strength in 2016 due to injury.	Chandler Farrell, Fr.
RG	**Cory Helms***	Sr.	Has started 36 career games, including 23 at Wake Forest.	Donell Stanley, Jr.
RT	**Zack Bailey***	Jr.	The team's best OL moves from the interior to tackle.	Blake Camper, Jr.
PK	Alexander Woznick	Fr.	Takes over for school's all-time leading scorer Elliott Fry.	Michael Almond, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Dante Sawyer	Sr.	Will be counted on for much more pass rush after a one-sack season.	Shameik Blackshear, So.
DT	**Taylor Stallworth***	Sr.	Perhaps only DL whose starting job seems secure entering the fall.	Keir Thomas, So.
DT	**Ulric Jones***	Sr.	Long-armed tackle blocked two kicks, batted down two passes in 2016.	Kobe Smith, So.
DE	D.J. Wonnum	So.	Defensive player of the spring after making a huge jump from Year 1.	Daniel Fennell, So.
LB	Skai Moore	Sr.	Could become 15th player in history to lead team in tackles for 4 years.	T.J. Brunson, So.
LB	**Bryson Allen-Williams***	Sr.	Second on the team in tackles (75) and TFLs (8.5) last season.	Eldridge Thompson, Jr.
CB	Rashad Fenton	Jr.	Part-time starter in 2016; had the only INT of the spring game.	Chris Lammons, Sr.
CB	**JaMarcus King***	Sr.	Struggled at end of 2016; suffered broken forearm in the spring game.	Kaleb Chalmers, So.
CB	**Chris Lammons***	Sr.	Starter in the nickel defense, an expected staple this season.	Antoine Wilder, So.
SS	Steven Montac	Jr.	Now a full-time starter at safety after also seeing time at CB last year.	Jaylin Dickerson, Fr.
FS	**D.J. Smith***	Sr.	Team-leader in tackles with 80 and forced three turnovers.	Javon Charleston, So.
P	Michael Almond	So.	Played in bowl game due to starter's injury, but not clear-cut starter.	Joseph Charlton, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

example and vocally.

The only starter to be replaced on offense is at left tackle, which is being manned entering fall practice by Malik Young, last year's starter at right tackle. Young is being challenged by redshirt freshman Sadarius Hutcherson, but junior college All-American Dennis Daley also figures to have his say in the competition.

"We're going to focus on becoming more athletic and changing direction," Wolford said. "It's always a challenge in this league because of the matchups you deal with on a daily basis. The best defensive linemen in the country play in the SEC."

Muschamp may not be known for his offensive prowess, but he has a group that could be among the league's best.

DEFENSE

Through the first half of the 2016 season, defense kept South Carolina in games. But then the unit was torched for an average of 31.9 points over the last seven games, including a 46-39 defeat in the Birmingham Bowl. The Gamecocks figure to have more lineup shake-ups beyond losing five starters.

"We have to have some cats come in and help us defensively who aren't here yet," Muschamp said. "I have made some decisions in my mind going in on defense that we have to get some new guys some opportunities. I've seen enough of what I've seen from some of these guys."

Pass rush was a problem last year and losing Darius English, who led the team in sacks, will hurt. The biggest point of emphasis for South Carolina is finding more team speed, and helping there should be D.J. Wonnum, who takes English's place at the BUCK position.

Keir Thomas provides athleticism and can affect plays in the backfield from the defensive tackle position, where he currently serves as a backup to seniors Taylor Stallworth and Ulric Jones. Defensive end Dante Sawyer must improve his one-sack total to remain a starter.

The Gamecocks lost three senior linebackers but welcome back Skai Moore, who sat out the 2016 season with a herniated disc. Moore, who has been a tackling machine in his career, will play alongside Bryson Allen-Williams, who had 8.5 tackles for a loss a year ago.

"He has great instincts and I'll play right off of him," Allen-Williams said of Moore. "Having someone play next to you that you know is a sure thing allows you to go out and play freely because you know there's someone right next to you who can make the play."

The linebacker duo should be the strength of South Carolina's defense, but there is experience in the secondary. The

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Skai Moore OLB 6-2 218 4.65 Sr.

A herniated disc requiring surgery robbed Moore of the entire 2016 campaign, but he remains South Carolina's top NFL prospect now that he has been cleared to return to the field.

The injury was a critical blow to South Carolina's defense and a cruel reminder that Moore had considered skipping the season to enter the 2016 NFL Draft, where he likely would have earned a Day Two selection. Durability was already a concern with Moore given that he has a frame that appears better suited to a traditional safety role rather than linebacker.

While his size was a concern, there were no questions about Moore's instincts, toughness or production. Moore led the Gamecocks in tackles in each of his first three years on campus. He is highly athletic, boasting the agility, speed and awareness to handle the coverage duties that are so critical in today's NFL.

Moore is not just capable in coverage, he's a legitimate weapon, intercepting 11 passes to this point, just three short of the South Carolina career record, held by Bo Davies.

2. Deebo Samuel	WR	5-11	205	4.49	rJr.
3. Alan Knott	C	6-4	280	5.04	rSr.
4. Cory Helms	OG	6-4	306	5.28	rSr.
5. Taylor Stallworth	DT	6-2	310	4.95	Sr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

DE **Dante Sawyer**

Photo by Michael Wade

group started well last season but often wasn't physical enough late in the year. The pass defense fell off, which included giving up 372 yards to Clemson.

Rashad Fenton emerged at cornerback during the spring and impressed with his coverage ability and improved physicality. He'll pair with Jamarcus King as the starting cornerbacks, but the early expectation is that South Carolina will play quite a bit of nickel defense with Chris Lammons and incoming recruit Jamyest Williams seeing time at that spot.

"Our coverage was suspect at times, so we'll need to continue working through those things," Muschamp said. "I am pleased with our progress through the spring and I thought we made some improvements."

Spring practice is a time when coaches look for answers. Muschamp, however, will carry those questions with him into the fall as he looks for playmakers.

SPECIAL TEAMS

South Carolina will have to completely retool the kicking game after losing the school's all-time leading scorer, a steady punter and a four-year starting snapper.

Elliott Fry has his name on the ramp at Williams-Brice Stadium, but he will have to be replaced. Fry insists freshman Alexander Woznick will break his records, so expectations are already high.

Joseph Charlton was ranked as the No. 1 punter in the country in 2015 by 247Sports, but he's running second to Michael Almond in a tight race for that job. Almond replaced injured Sean Kelly in the Birmingham Bowl, punting for a 44-yard average.

The return game is strong with Deebo Samuel on kickoffs (26.9 yards per return) and Chris Lammons handling punts (7.9 yards per return).

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

South Carolina has 10 opponents on its schedule that played in a bowl last season and another — Wofford College — that went to the FCS playoffs and won its first two games. To say the Gamecocks, which open in a neutral-site game against NC State, have a challenging schedule would be an understatement.

The only FBS opponent that didn't make a bowl, Missouri, is the first SEC opponent of the season, but that game is on the road in Week Two. Permanent cross-divisional opponent Texas A&M rounds out a five-game September that includes three games away from home.

Border rival Georgia is typically an early-season opponent, but that game has been pushed back to Nov. 4, which is a month that includes games against Florida and defending national champion Clemson.

— John Whittle

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.6	39
Rushing	161.0	65
Passing	282.4	20
Total	443.4	33
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.4	89
Rushing	212.2	105
Passing	220.5	52
Total	432.7	92
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 2	- 0.15	T-73

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.9	110
Rushing	154.7	T-87
Passing	207.5	84
Total	362.2	99
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.5	71
Rushing	217.4	109
Passing	212.4	50
Total	429.8	94
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.42	T-32

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.8	116
Rushing	134.4	108
Passing	213.2	83
Total	347.5	115
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.5	51
Rushing	203.2	90
Passing	208.7	39
Total	411.9	66
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.54	T-24

NOTEBOOK

South Carolina welcomes one new position coach to the staff this season as **Eric Wolford** is back for his second go-around as offensive line coach. He replaces **Shawn Elliott**, who accepted the head coaching position at Georgia State. Wolford was with the Gamecocks in 2009 before taking the head coaching job at Youngstown State, where he spent four seasons and then two with the San Francisco 49ers.

• **Zack Bailey**, who has started the better part of two seasons at left guard, is moving to right tackle this year. Bailey is considered the most talented offensive lineman on the roster, and tackle was certainly a weak point for the team last season.

"Coach **Muschamp** said they needed someone out there who is physical," Bailey said. "I told him that was fine and would love to learn the position. I want to help the team and it helps me out a lot later on."

Bailey had never played tackle until spring practice, so the position switch has come with a lot of challenges.

"Athletically, we feel like he can play the right side and right tackle position," Muschamp said. "Zack is a good enough athlete to play on the edge and we felt that way. It's all about finding the best guys to go out there and play well."

• Redshirt freshman tight end **Evan Hinson** didn't participate in spring practice as he was busy playing on a Final Four basketball team. Hinson joined the basketball team in January after the bowl game, so he didn't have a huge role, but he saw action in eight games totaling 21 minutes. The former three-star recruit is competing for playing time at a deep, experienced tight end position, where he'll bring some athleticism and pass-catching ability.

• When the season opens, tight end **Hayden Hurst** will be a 24-year old junior. The school record holder for catches at his position, Hurst played two years in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization after signing for $400,000 out of high school. He was elected one of four permanent captains last year, the first sophomore in school history to receive that honor.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the offense:** "South Carolina has got a really good quarterback, two good running backs, three quality receivers, a good tight end. The problem is a deficiency in recruiting offensive linemen. They've signed a lot of linemen that aren't SEC-caliber. They're like Wake Forest kids."

• **On the defense:** "The defensive backs and defensive linemen, it's inexcusable what they're playing with. It will take time to get it right."

• **On Will Muschamp:** "Going 6-6 (last year) was a miracle and this year their schedule is tougher. But they do have a quarterback they can win with and some skill position guys. Will has done a really good job recruiting. And Will is fiery enough and a good enough defensive coach to where they'll keep improving. But they've got to improve their talent level and depth. If they give Will enough time and keep supporting him and don't get negative, he'll win."

GAMECOCKS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
19 Jake Bentley	QB	6-4	223	So.	Opelika, AL
17 Danny Gordon	QB	6-0	207	Jr.	Worthington, OH
16 Bailey Hart	QB	6-3	176	Fr.	Mt. Pleasant
12 Michael Scarnecchia	QB	6-4	199	Jr.	Fleming Island, FL
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
34 Mon Denson	RB	5-10	205	So.	LaGrange, GA
23 Rico Dowdle	RB	6-0	216	So.	Asheville, NC
36 C.J. Freeman	RB	5-11	213	Fr.	Greensboro, NC
32 Caleb Kinlaw	RB	5-10	200	Jr.	Goose Creek
44 Adrian McGee	RB	5-11	179	Fr.	Greer
25 A.J. Turner	RB	5-10	189	So.	Clifton, VA
27 Ty'Son Williams	RB	6-0	209	So.	Sumter
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
7 Korey Banks	WR	5-11	185	So.	Tyrone, GA
8 Randrecous Davis	WR	5-11	199	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
83 Chavis Dawkins	WR	6-2	209	So.	Duncan
85 Devin Dingle	WR	5-9	170	So.	Summerville
89 Bryan Edwards	WR	6-3	209	So.	Conway
24 Garrett Frederick	WR	5-10	178	Fr.	Plano, TX
80 Shemar Glenn	WR	6-0	171	So.	Union
5 Terry Googer	WR	6-4	220	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
1 Deebo Samuel	WR	6-0	208	Jr.	Inman
18 OrTre Smith	WR	6-4	229	Fr.	Mount Pleasant
9 Jerad Washington	WR	5-8	163	So.	Jacksonville, FL
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
40 Jacob August	TE	6-6	252	Jr.	Columbia
3 K.C. Crosby	TE	6-1	230	Jr.	Bamberg
82 Evan Hinson	TE	6-4	225	Fr.	Deltona, FL
81 Hayden Hurst	TE	6-5	253	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
84 Kyle Markway	TE	6-4	246	So.	St. Louis, MO
87 Kiel Pollard	TE	6-1	235	So.	Moultrie, GA
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
78 Zack Bailey	OL	6-6	311	Jr.	Summerville
63 Blake Camper	OL	6-8	306	Jr.	Virginia Beach, VA
73 Summie Carlay	OL	6-5	270	Fr.	Laurens
79 Trey Derouen	OL	6-4	307	So.	Lilburn, GA
60 Chandler Farrell	OL	6-3	285	Fr.	Summerville
67 Ryan Green	OL	6-3	289	So.	James Island
51 Cory Helms	OL	6-5	308	Sr.	Alpharetta, GA
50 Sadarius Hutcherson	OL	6-4	311	Fr.	Huntingdon, TN
61 Cameron Johnson	OL	6-6	293	Fr.	Bennettsville
70 Alan Knott	OL	6-4	274	Sr.	Tyrone, GA
65 Pika Leota	OL	6-5	309	Fr.	Asheville, NC
69 D.J. Park	OL	6-5	332	Sr.	Dillon
55 Christian Pellage	OL	6-7	300	So.	Brooksville, FL
66 Will Putnam	OL	6-5	291	Fr.	Harrisburg, NC
72 Donell Stanley	OL	6-4	317	Jr.	Floydale
77 Malik Young	OL	6-4	294	Jr.	Pelzer

Defensive Linemen	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
91 Shameik Blackshear	DL	6-5	253	So.	Bluffton
52 Jajuan Blankenship	DL	5-11	269	Fr.	Anderson
61 Javion Duncan	DL	5-11	270	Jr.	Simpsonville
35 Daniel Fennell	DL	6-3	240	So.	Loganville, GA
50 Griffin Gentry	DL	6-1	260	Fr.	Birmingham, AL
93 Ulric Jones	DL	6-6	309	Sr.	Oxford, AL
95 Dante Sawyer	DL	6-3	265	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
97 Kobe Smith	DL	6-2	297	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
90 Taylor Stallworth	DL	6-3	308	Sr.	Mobile, AL
98 Stephon Taylor	DL	6-6	271	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
5 Keir Thomas	DL	6-1	260	So.	Miami, FL
96 Aaron Thompson	DL	6-3	288	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
94 M.J. Webb	DL	6-3	285	Fr.	Rutledge, GA
48 Dexter Wideman	DL	6-4	288	So.	Saluda
92 D.J. Wonnum	DL	6-4	248	So.	Stone Mountain, GA
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
4 Bryson Allen-Williams	LB	6-2	229	Sr.	Ellenwood, GA
57 Hassan Belton	LB	5-11	208	So.	Blythewood
6 T.J. Brunson	LB	6-1	228	So.	Columbia
45 Spencer Eason-Riddle	LB	6-0	220	Fr.	Raleigh, NC
53 Mitch Langford	LB	5-9	208	Jr.	Richburg
10 Skai Moore	LB	6-2	221	Sr.	Cooper City, FL
32 Brett Shore	LB	5-11	210	Sr.	Irmo
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
12 Kaleb Chalmers	DB	5-11	179	So.	Greenwood
17 Javon Charleston	DB	6-0	183	So.	Gurnee, IL
26 Jaylin Dickerson	DB	6-1	180	Fr.	Southern Pines, NC
16 Rashad Fenton	DB	5-11	183	Jr.	Miami, FL
47 Jaylin Foster	DB	5-10	187	So.	Duncan
34 Scott Grant	DB	5-10	192	Jr.	Laurens
7 Jamarcus King	DB	6-1	186	Sr.	Mobile, AL
3 Chris Lammons	DB	5-9	188	Sr.	Lauderhill, FL
22 Steven Montac	DB	5-10	186	Jr.	Covington, GA
40 Jason Senn	DB	5-8	177	So.	Beaufort
39 Demetrius Smalls	DB	5-9	170	Sr.	Bluffton
31 Chris Smith	DB	5-9	180	Fr.	Rock Hill
24 D.J. Smith	DB	5-11	194	Sr.	Marietta, GA
36 Morgan Vest	DB	6-0	190	Fr.	Leander, TX
29 Antoine Wilder	DB	5-10	185	So.	Riverdale, GA
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
85 Michael Almond	K/P	6-3	229	So.	North Augusta
45 Ben Asbury	LS	6-0	206	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
90 Wyman Baxley	LS	6-2	225	Fr.	Athens, GA
20 Joseph Charlton	K/P	6-5	184	So.	Columbia
46 Harrison Freeman	LS	6-3	210	Fr.	Raleigh, NC
48 Nick McGriff	LS	6-0	214	Jr.	Gainesville, FL
43 Parker White	K/P	6-4	193	Fr.	Mount Pleasant
42 Alexander Woznick	PK	5-11	165	Fr.	Greenville

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Bentley	7	139.9	125	190	4	65.8	1420	9	47	202.9
B. McIlwain	8	99.2	62	118	1	52.5	600	2	42	75.0

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Samuel	10	59	783	13.3	1	47	78.3
H. Hurst	13	48	616	12.8	1	47	47.4
B. Edwards	12	44	590	13.4	4	42	49.2

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Dowdle	9	133	781	17	764	5.7	6	44	84.9
A.J. Turner	12	116	542	45	497	4.3	3	75	41.4
D. Williams	9	56	253	14	239	4.3	3	33	26.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D.J. Smith 80, Allen-Williams 75, T.J. Holloman 71
Tackles for loss: D. English 13, Allen-Williams 8.5, J. Walton 6.5
Sacks: D. English 9, Allen-Williams 2, K. Thomas 2
Interceptions: T.J. Holloman 3, J. King 3, C. Lammons 3

247SPORTS GAMECOCKS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Jamyest Williams, CB
The 5-9, 175-pound prospect is diminutive in stature, but he makes up for his lack of size with elite quickness and explosion as well as an ultra-competitive disposition. Look for Williams to factor into the starting nickelback spot this coming fall.

OrTre Smith, WR
The 6-4, 229-pound four-star recruit adds more size to South Carolina's wide receiving corps. Smith uses that size to his advantage and bullies smaller defenders for the ball. While he may not possess elite speed, he's quick enough out of his breaks to create separation from defensive backs.

Javon Kinlaw, DL
The 6-6, 340-pound junior college prospect is expected to play right away for the Gamecocks. South Carolina needs help on the defensive line, and Kinlaw could potentially earn snaps at both strong-side defensive end and defensive tackle this fall.

SLEEPER

Jaylin Dickerson, S
The 6-0, 180-pound safety enrolled early and has coaches super excited after impressing during spring practices. Dickerson was only a mid-three-star recruit out of high school, but look for him to earn immediate playing time this fall for South Carolina.

2018 NEEDS

South Carolina will look to improve the talent level along the offensive line in the 2018 recruiting cycle and sign around four prospects at the position. Quarterback will be another important position for the Gamecocks, who might be in the market for two signal-callers in the class.

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	6	18	0
✪✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	24
Average Stars	3.25
Total Stars	78
National Rank: 21	SEC: 8

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Davonne Bowen	LB	6-1	224	✪✪✪	Simpsonville	Woodmont
247Sports.com rated No. 16 outside linebacker nationally and No. 4 player in South Carolina… As a senior, had 75 tackles, six quarterback sacks and two interceptions… Had 61 tackles and 14 quarterback sacks as a junior.						
Zay Brown	DB	5-10	197	✪✪✪	Athens, GA	Clarke Central
Ranked No. 137 safety nationally by 247Sports.com… All-State… Helped team to state playoffs as a senior… Had 80 tackles and three interceptions… As a junior, had 78 tackles and six interceptions.						
Summie Carlay	OL	6-5	269	✪✪✪	Laurens	Laurens
Enrolled in January… 247Sports.com rated No. 65 offensive tackle nationally and No. 10 player in South Carolina.						
Jordon Carty	OL	6-7	299	✪✪✪	Lauderdale Lakes, FL	South Broward
Ranked No. 114 offensive tackle nationally and No. 187 player in Florida by 247Sports.com.						
Kaleb Chalmers	DB	5-10	181	✪✪✪	Greenwood	Northwest Mississippi CC
Enrolled in January… As a sophomore, had 30 tackles, one quarterback sack, one interception, and 13 passes broken up… Redshirted at Clemson in his true freshman season… Graduated from high school in 2015… Three-time All-State.						
Dennis Daley	OL	6-6	309	✪✪✪	Columbia	Georgia Military
Will have three years to play two… 247Sports.com rated No. 6 junior college offensive tackle and No. 39 player nationally… NJCAA All-American… Helped team average 46.2 points per game as a sophomore.						
Jaylin Dickerson	DB	6-1	180	✪✪✪	Southern Pines, NC	Pinecrest
Enrolled in January… Ranked No. 93 safety nationally and No. 37 player in North Carolina by 247Sports.com… As a junior, had 64 tackles, including six tackles for loss, and two interceptions.						
Eric Douglas	OL	6-5	297	✪✪✪	Charlotte, NC	Mallard Creek
247Sports.com rated No. 35 offensive tackle nationally and No. 10 player in North Carolina… Helped team to state championship as a junior.						
Sherrod Greene	LB	6-1	221	✪✪✪	Rocky Mount, NC	Rocky Mount
Ranked No. 21 outside linebacker nationally and No. 14 player in North Carolina by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 96 tackles and two interceptions… Helped team to 14-2 record and state championship as a junior.						
Tavyn Jackson	DB	5-11	177	✪✪✪	Tallahassee, FL	Rickards
247Sports.com rated No. 88 cornerback nationally and No. 112 player in Florida… All-State… Had 76 tackles and four interceptions as a senior… As a junior, had 58 tackles and 15 passes broken up.						
Brad Johnson	DL	6-4	230	✪✪✪✪	Pendleton	Pendleton
Ranked No. 16 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 3 player in South Carolina by 247Sports.com.						
Javon Kinlaw	DL	6-6	340	✪✪✪✪	Charleston	Jones County Junior College
247Sports.com rated No. 2 junior college strongside defensive end and No. 7 player nationally… In 2016, had 26 tackles, including 8.5 tackles for loss, and 4.5 quarterback sacks.						
Keisean Nixon	DB	5-10	192	✪✪✪	Compton, CA	Arizona Western
Will have three years to play two… Ranked No. 3 junior college cornerback and No. 34 player nationally by 247Sports.com… Helped team to 11-1 record and No. 3 NJCAA ranking as a sophomore… Had 30 tackles, six interceptions, returning two for touchdowns, and five passes broken up… Averaged 42 yards per kickoff return and scored two touchdowns.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Will Register	TE	6-4	236	✪✪✪	Chapin	Chapin
247Sports.com rated No. 25 tight end nationally and No. 7 player in South Carolina… As a senior, had 24 receptions for 251 yards.						
Jordan Rhodes	OL	6-5	318	✪✪✪	Fairburn, GA	Creekside
Ranked No. 113 offensive tackle nationally and No. 133 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Did not play football until junior year of high school.						
OrTre Smith	WR	6-4	229	✪✪✪✪	Mt. Pleasant	Wando
Enrolled in January… 247Sports.com rated No. 15 wide receiver and No. 86 player nationally and No. 1 player in South Carolina… Selected to U.S. Army All-American Game, but did not participate due to injury… Had 37 receptions for 448 yards and two touchdowns in an injury-shortened senior season… Had 29 tackles and one interception.						
Shi Smith	WR	5-10	181	✪✪✪✪	Union	Union County
Ranked No. 4 athlete nationally and No. 2 player in South Carolina by 247Sports.com… As a senior, helped team to state playoffs… Had 47 receptions for 609 yards and 10 touchdowns… Had 54 receptions for 1,337 yards and 17 touchdowns as a junior.						
Damani Staley	LB	6-1	205	✪✪✪	Columbia	Ridge View
247Sports.com rated No. 81 tight end nationally and No. 20 player in South Carolina… Had 120 tackles and 29 quarterback sacks as a senior… As a junior, had 21 quarterback sacks.						
Aaron Sterling	DL	6-2	238	✪✪✪	Atlanta, GA	Tucker
Ranked No. 45 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 93 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State… As a senior, helped team to state championship game.						
Chad Terrell	WR	6-2	208	✪✪✪	Bogue Chitto,MS	North Paulding
247Sports.com rated No. 42 wide receiver nationally and No. 31 player in Mississippi… Helped team to state playoffs as a senior… Had 64 receptions for 1,236 yards and 17 touchdowns… Had 115 career receptions for 2,062 yards and 27 touchdowns.						
Eldridge Thompson	LB	6-1	191	✪✪✪	Houston, TX	Coffeyville CC
Ranked No. 3 junior college outside linebacker and No. 97 player nationally by 247Sports.com… In 2015, had 102 tackles, three quarterback sacks, one interception, and one fumble recovered and returned for touchdown.						
Jay Urich	QB	6-4	196	✪✪✪	Greenville	Wren
247Sports.com rated No. 19 dual-threat quarterback nationally and No. 17 player in South Carolina… As a senior, completed 183 of 315 passes for 2,055 yards and 20 touchdowns… Had 1,036 yards rushing and 15 touchdowns.						
M.J. Webb	DL	6-3	277	✪✪✪✪	Rutledge, GA	Morgan County
Enrolled in January… Ranked No. 13 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 26 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state playoffs as a senior… As a junior, had 77 tackles, including 12 tackles for loss, and seven quarterback sacks.						
Jamyest Williams	DB	5-9	175	✪✪✪✪	Athens, GA	Grayson
247Sports.com rated No. 12 cornerback and No. 87 player nationally and No. 9 player in Georgia… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State… As a senior, helped team to 14-1 record and state championship.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Moore is back on the attack after neck surgery

Linebacker Skai Moore went 456 days between tackles, but with that first hit this spring after returning from neck surgery, he showed he was ready to be back on the field.

Moore, who was South Carolina's leading tackler in each of his first three seasons on campus, missed all of 2016 after having surgery to repair a herniated disk. He didn't participate in the first spring practice under coach Will Muschamp, but he was back this spring having added some muscle mass during his time away.

When Moore, a native of Cooper City, Fla., made his first tackle of the spring, he showed no ill-effects from the surgery or signs of hesitancy.

"Never a tentative moment," Muschamp said. "He went right after it. That's the type of competitor he is. He's a good football player, extremely instinctive."

His first true contact came when he met 6-5, 332-pound pulling guard D.J. Park in the hole on a running play. He couldn't have asked for a bigger challenge, literally, from South Carolina's offensive roster.

"It felt good. It woke me back up," Moore said. "The doctor said a lot of dudes are timid when they come back and hesitant because of the neck injury. I've been really keeping that in my head. The doctor said I'm fine, I feel fine, so I'm not worried about it. I'm ready to make plays."

Moore, who has 260 career tackles, seeks to become the 15th player in NCAA Division I history to lead his team in tackles for four seasons. He is also tied for third in school history with 11 interceptions, needing three more to tie Bo Davies' school record.

Moore got his feet wet in competitive action in the spring game, playing just more than a quarter. He didn't record any statistics, but he knows that — even after 456 days off the field from the end of the 2015 season to the start of spring practice — he's capable of being an All-SEC performer again.

He earned second-team honors from the coaches and the Associated Press in 2015.

LB

Skai Moore

Photo by Jim Dedmon Sportswire via AP Images

"I know I can make plays," Moore said. "I'll go out there and do what I do. I'm pretty confident in that, so I think I'll be able to come back where I left off from and just keep making plays."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/south-carolina

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

WR DEEBO SAMUEL

Overcame an early season hamstring problem to lead the team with 59 catches for 783 yards. He was also dangerous in the run game, predominately on the wide receiver sweep, carrying 15 times for 98 yards and six TDs. ... Set a Birmingham Bowl record with 14 catches for 190 yards against USF. ... Was voted as Co-Offensive MVP by his teammates for the 2016 season. ... Took over kickoff return duties late in the year and averaged 26.9 yards per return with one TD.

EMERGING STAR

QB JAKE BENTLEY

After enrolling early, the plan was to redshirt Bentley in 2016, but that was scrapped at the halfway point of the season. He started the final seven games, including the Birmingham Bowl. ... Passed for 1,420 yards, going 125 for 190 with nine touchdowns and four interceptions. The 65.8 completion percentage ranks fourth in program history. ... The son of running backs coach Bobby Bentley. ... Two brothers — Chas Dodd (Rutgers) and Shuler Bentley (Old Dominion) — were starting QBs in college.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB TY'SON WILLIAMS

Williams sat out the 2016 season per NCAA rules after transferring from North Carolina. ... Williams rushed 19 times for 57 yards and caught one pass during his true freshman season with the Tar Heels, playing behind Elijah Hood and T.J. Logan. ... Williams, a native of Sumter, S.C., rushed 11 times for 83 yards and a touchdown in the Garnet & Black Spring Game, while also catching three passes for 30 yards.

SEC YEAR IN REVIEW

THE RACE

Alabama did what a champion does: Rip hope from any team that would dare to challenge it. The Tide won the SEC West by three games, and the domination was such that only one league contest — a 10-0 victory over LSU — was within 18 points. That triumph on Nov. 5 put Alabama two games up in the loss column to pretty much seal the deal.

Tennessee was favored to win the East with a veteran crew and top-notch quarterback Joshua Dobbs. Everything seemed to be going according to plan on Sept. 24 when the Vols erased a 21-0 deficit to beat rival Florida for the first time since 2004. They looked like a team of destiny a week later when they shocked Georgia on a Hail Mary to complete a 34-31 comeback win.

Tennessee was 5-0, had vanquished its two foremost east rivals ... and then the Vols veered right into a ditch. Injuries piled up, the defense became a sieve, the comeback mojo dried up. Loss at A&M. Loss to Alabama. Loss at South Carolina.

Florida said thanks and went on to win the division by two games.

THE CHAMPION

Alabama had no trouble with Florida in the SEC title game for the second consecutive season and advanced to the College Football Playoff as a No. 1 seed. The Tide efficiently suffocated Washington in a semifinal, 24-7, but was denied back-to-back titles in a rematch with Clemson.

The Tigers scored a touchdown with one second left for a 35-31 victory.

That was a sour finish for a big-play defense that had been discussed as one of the best ever at Alabama. The Tide had the national defensive Player of the Year in defensive end Jonathan Allen, the Butkus Award winner as the nation's top linebacker in Reuben Foster and a ball-hawking secondary, led by Minkah Fitzpatrick, that returned six interceptions for touchdowns.

THE STARS

Offensive Player of the Year: Jalen Hurts, QB, Alabama

Nobody gave the true freshman much of a chance of playing, let alone starting, with three older candidates on the roster. But he earned the trust of coach Nick Saban and carried himself with maturity, passing for 2,780 yards, running for 954 and accounting for 36 TDs.

Defensive Player of the Year: Jonathan Allen, DL, Alabama

He could control the game from anywhere on the line, finishing with 16 tackles for loss, including 10.5 sacks. He blocked a kick and recovered three fumbles, returning one 75 yards for a score against Ole Miss. Was sixth in the Heisman voting.

Coach of the Year: Nick Saban, Alabama

Who else? Shockingly, it was his first victory in this category since 2009.

THE BOWLS

Twelve teams ... thirteen games: That's an entire extra week's worth of games for the SEC when the bowl season comes around.

It really has become all about the SEC in the postseason, even though Clemson snuck off with the national championship at the very end this time. Every time a college football fan turned around, there was another SEC team playing in a bowl game. Only Missouri and Ole Miss — the division cellar dwellers — didn't get the extra couple weeks of practice in December.

CFP National Championship	Clemson 35, **Alabama 31**
Peach Bowl (CFP Semifinal)	**Alabama 24**, Washington 7
Sugar Bowl	Oklahoma 35, **Auburn 19**
Citrus Bowl	**LSU 29**, Louisville 9
Outback Bowl	**Florida 30**, Iowa 3
Music City Bowl	**Tennessee 38**, Nebraska 24
AutoZone Liberty Bowl	**Georgia 31**, TCU 23
TaxSlayer Bowl	Georgia Tech 33, **Kentucky 18**
Belk Bowl	Virginia Tech 35, **Arkansas 24**
Birmingham Bowl	South Florida 46, **South Carolina 39 (OT)**
Texas Bowl	Kansas State 33, **Texas A&M 28**
Independence Bowl	NC State 41, **Vanderbilt 17**
St. Petersburg Bowl	**Mississippi State 17**, Miami (Ohio) 16

ALL-SEC TEAM

*as selected by the league coaches

OFFENSE — First Team

QB	Jalen Hurts	Alabama
RB	Kamryn Pettway	Auburn
RB	Derrius Guice	LSU
WR	Christian Kirk	Texas A&M
WR	ArDarius Stewart	Alabama
TE	Evan Engram	Ole Miss
C	Ethan Pocic	LSU
OL	Cam Robinson	Alabama
OL	Dan Skipper	Arkansas
OL	Avery Gennesy	Texas A&M
OL	Will Clapp	LSU
AP	Christian Kirk	Texas A&M
PK	Daniel Carlson	Auburn

OFFENSE — Second Team

QB	Joshua Dobbs	Tennessee
QB	Chad Kelly	Ole Miss
RB	Rawleigh Williams III	Arkansas
RB	Ralph Webb	Vanderbilt
RB	Leonard Fournette	LSU
WR	Calvin Ridley	Alabama
WR	Fred Ross	Mississippi State
TE	O.J. Howard	Alabama
C	Jon Toth	Kentucky
OL	Braden Smith	Auburn
OL	Will Holden	Vanderbilt
OL	Martez Ivey	Florida
OL	Alex Kozan	Auburn
AP	Derrius Guice	LSU
PK	Gary Wunderlich	Ole Miss

DEFENSE — First Team

DL	Myles Garrett	Texas A&M
DL	Jonathan Allen	Alabama
DL	Carl Lawson	Auburn
DL	Derek Barnett	Tennessee
LB	Kendell Beckwith	LSU
LB	Zach Cunningham	Vanderbilt
LB	Reuben Foster	Alabama
DB	Jalen Tabor	Florida
DB	Tre'Davious White	LSU
DB	Minkah Fitzpatrick	Alabama
DB	Aarion Penton	Missouri
P	JK Scott	Alabama

DEFENSE — Second Team

DL	Arden Key	LSU
DL	Montravius Adams	Auburn
DL	Charles Harris	Missouri
DL	Caleb Brantley	Florida
LB	Tim Williams	Alabama
LB	Jarrad Davis	Florida
LB	Jordan Jones	Kentucky
DB	Jamal Adams	LSU
DB	Eddie Jackson	Alabama
DB	Quincy Wilson	Florida
DB	Justin Evans	Texas A&M
P	Johnny Townsend	Florida

THE STANDINGS

EASTERN

Team	W-L	Pct.	PF	PA	W-L	Pct.	PF	PA
Florida	6-2	.750	196	123	9-4	.692	311	218
Tennessee	4-4	.500	287	295	9-4	.692	473	375
Georgia	4-4	.500	167	192	8-5	.615	319	312
Kentucky	4-4	.500	185	237	7-6	.538	390	407
South Carolina	3-5	.375	126	168	6-7	.462	270	344
Vanderbilt	3-5	.375	162	162	6-7	.462	299	312
Missouri	2-6	.250	181	280	4-8	.333	377	378

WESTERN

Team	W-L	Pct.	PF	PA	W-L	Pct.	PF	PA
Alabama	8-0	1.000	304	118	14-1	.933	582	195
Auburn	5-3	.625	210	147	8-5	.615	406	222
LSU	5-3	.625	218	141	8-4	.667	340	189
Texas A&M	4-4	.500	252	242	8-5	.615	453	319
Arkansas	3-5	.375	214	298	7-6	.538	394	404
Mississippi State	3-5	.375	234	272	6-7	.462	395	413
Ole Miss	2-6	.250	234	295	5-7	.417	391	408

TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

For more coverage of the Volunteers, visit tennessee.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Larry Scott **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Bob Shoop **STADIUM:** Neyland Stadium: 102,455

NEW-LOOK VOLS SEEK NEXT BIG STEP IN JONES ERA

Brick by brick, Butch Jones has revived Tennessee's program from critical condition to competitive.

The Vols, 2-14 in SEC play in the two seasons before Jones arrived, have recorded consecutive nine-win seasons for the first time since 2006-07. They have been to three bowl games in a row for the first time in 12 years. They won all three bowl games. They are putting players back into the NFL Draft after having none selected in 2015 and 2016.

But there is another step to take. A big step.

Tennessee hasn't won the SEC East since 2007. It hasn't finished in the national Top 20 in nine years. It hasn't won 10 games in a season in a decade.

Tennessee was picked to win the East last season and beat its main contenders, Florida and Georgia. Yet the Vols lost to South Carolina and Vanderbilt and blew a chance to not only play for the SEC Championship but earn a berth in the Sugar Bowl.

That left a sour taste in a fan base starved for success. It also didn't sit well with Jones, who revamped his staff. Some left voluntarily. Some were fired.

Larry Scott was promoted from tight ends/special teams coach to offensive coordinator. Walt Wells was promoted from quality control to offensive line coach. Kevin Beard was hired to coach receivers. Charlton Warren was brought in to coach the secondary. Mike Canales is the new quarterbacks coach. And Brady Hoke, the biggest name of the newbies, is the new defensive line coach.

Jones also hired a new strength and conditioning coach, Rock Gullickson, from the Los Angeles Rams, the year after firing Dave Lawson.

Hoke, Canales and Wells have more than 80 combined years in coaching. But Scott has never been a college play-caller. Beard has been a full-time college coach for one season. And Warren, who played and coached at Air Force, served 10 years of active duty in the military and became a full-time coach in 2005.

Tennessee will not only have a new look on its staff, it will have a new look at several key positions. Gone is record-setting quarterback Josh Dobbs. Gone is defensive end Derek Barnett, who broke Reggie White's school record for career sacks. Gone are leading receiver Josh Malone, shutdown corner Cam Sutton and elusive running back Alvin Kamara.

OFFENSE

Tennessee scored more offensive touchdowns (59) than any other team in the SEC last year, including Alabama.

The Vols displayed balance, averaging more than 200 yards rushing and passing. Two players rushed for at least 600 yards. Two caught at least 40 passes.

The architect of the offense was Mike DeBord, who was set to retire before taking a job at Indiana as offensive coordinator so he could be closer to family. Jones promoted the untested Larry Scott, who observed DeBord's play calling while seated next to him in the press box.

"This will be Tennessee's offense," Scott said, "and there will be a lot of people involved with it. It will be a collaborative effort."

Scott must identify a quarterback to replace Josh Dobbs, who set school records for career rushing yards (2,160) and rushing touchdowns (32) by a quarterback. Dobbs accounted for 85 career touchdowns. He finished his UT career in the top five in total offense, touchdown passes, passing yards and completions.

Junior Quinten Dormady and redshirt freshman Jarrett Guarantano battled for the starting job in the spring. Dormady has more experience and possesses a strong, accurate arm, but he's not as mobile as Dobbs. Guarantano also has a strong, accurate arm and is more mobile than Dormady, but can he run the offense as efficiently?

Typically, Jones' zone-read scheme has worked better with a more mobile quarterback. But Jones isn't expected to name a starter until a week or so before the season opener.

John Kelly emerged at running back after Jalen Hurd quit the team. After rushing for just 18 yards in the first five games, Kelly gained 612 yards in the final seven games, including at least 70 yards in five games. He's capable of a 1,000-yard season.

Jauan Jennings (6-3, 205) is an inviting target. The junior was second on the team with 40 catches for 580 yards, including the game-winning Hail Mary touchdown against

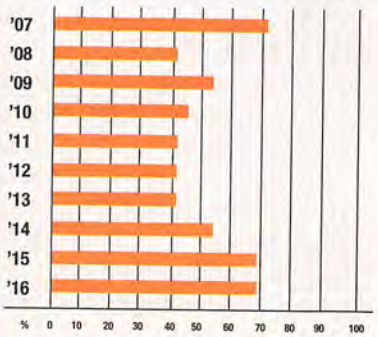
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 4	vs. Georgia Tech (Atlanta, GA)	9-4
Sept. 9	INDIANA STATE	
Sept. 16	at Florida	9-4
Sept. 23	MASSACHUSETTS	2-10
Sept. 30	GEORGIA	8-5
Oct. 14	SOUTH CAROLINA	6-7
Oct. 21	at Alabama	14-1
Oct. 28	at Kentucky	7-6
Nov. 4	SOUTHERN MISS	7-6
Nov. 11	at Missouri	4-8
Nov. 18	LSU	8-4
Nov. 25	VANDERBILT	6-7

RESULTS

	9-4, 4-4	
W	APPALACHIAN STATE (OT)	20-13
W	vs. Virginia Tech (Bristol, TN)	45-24
W	OHIO	28-19
W	FLORIDA	38-28
W	at Georgia	34-31
L	at Texas A&M (2OT)	38-45
L	ALABAMA	10-49
L	at South Carolina	21-24
W	TENNESSEE TECH	55-0
W	KENTUCKY	49-36
W	MISSOURI	63-37
L	at Vanderbilt	34-45
	Music City Bowl	
W	Nebraska	38-24

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Knoxville, Tenn.

2016:
9-4 overall, 4-4 SEC (T-2nd, East)

COACH:
Butch Jones – At Tennessee: 30-21, 4 years; overall: 80-48, 10 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
14; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB John Kelly, WR Jauan Jennings, TE Ethan Wolf, LB Darrin Kirkland Jr., FS Todd Kelly Jr., NB Rashaan Gaulden

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The Vols should be able to run the ball effectively with John Kelly and three returning starters on the offensive line. Kirkland is a solid linebacker, and the secondary is led by Todd Kelly Jr. and Gaulden. Tennessee should be strong in special teams with top return men and a dependable punter.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Tennessee must replace one of its all-time most productive quarterbacks, and either option is going to be inexperienced. The Vols must also get more settled at left tackle. On defense, UT ranked 104th nationally against the run last season and allowed at least 590 yards to five opponents. The defense must generate a pass rush without career sack leader Derek Barnett.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Josh Dobbs, RB Alvin Kamara, WR Josh Malone, DE Derek Barnett, CB Cam Sutton

OVERVIEW:
The Vols offense will take a step back without Dobbs, with the attack depending greatly on a new quarterback and how the offensive line plays. The defense ... well, if it stays healthy, it has a chance to improve, even with key personnel losses. Bottom line, though: UT will be hard pressed to match the nine-win seasons of the previous two years.

RB
John
KELLY

Photo by Tim Gangloff/CSM via AP Images

DB

Evan Berry

Photo by Tim Gangloff/CSM via AP Images

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Quinten Dormady	Jr.	A two-year backup, Dormady has 39 pass attempts.	Jarrett Guarantano, So.
RB	John Kelly	Jr.	Rushed for 612 yards in last seven games, averaged 6.4 ypc.	Ty Chandler, Fr.
WR	**Jauan Jennings***	Jr.	Top returning receiver (40 catches); great competitor.	Latrell Williams, So.
WR	Marquez Callaway	So.	Talented wideout with good speed, quickness.	Josh Smith, Sr.
WR	Tyler Byrd	So.	Excellent athlete and is one of the team's fastest players.	Brandon Johnson, So.
TE	**Ethan Wolf***	Sr.	Has 67 career catches, but needs to avoid drops.	Jakob Johnson, Sr.
LT	Drew Richmond	So.	Touted prospect who still hasn't reached potential.	Marcus Tatum, So.
LG	**Jashon Robertson***	Sr.	Perhaps UT's best lineman; has 34 career starts.	Jack Jones, Jr.
C	**Coleman Thomas***	Sr.	Has All-SEC potential at center; is effective pulling.	Riley Locklear, Fr.
RG	**Brett Kendrick***	Sr.	Team's most versatile lineman, could play tackle.	Venzell Boulware, So.
RT	Trey Smith	Fr.	5-star recruit enrolled at mid-term and earned job.	Chance Hall, Jr.
PK	**Aaron Medley***	Sr.	Solid inside the 40, but rarely hits the long ones.	Brent Cimaglia, Fr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Jonathan Kongbo	Jr.	Highly touted JC transfer who matured during spring.	Kyle Phillips, Jr.
DT	Kahlil McKenzie	Jr.	5-star legacy player has yet to live up to hype.	Shy Tuttle, Jr.
DT	**Kendal Vickers***	Sr.	Made 26 starts last two years, solid technician.	Alexis Johnson, Sr.
DE	Darrell Taylor	So.	Coaches have bragged about him for two years.	Deandre Johnson, Fr.
LB	**Colton Jumper***	Jr.	Former walk-on made eight starts, over 60 tackles.	Cortez McDowell, Sr.
LB	**Darrin Kirkland Jr.***	Jr.	Smart, fast, leader; missed five games due to injury.	Daniel Bituli, So.
CB	**Emmanuel Moseley***	Sr.	Has just one interception in 39 career games.	Marquill Osborne, So.
CB	Justin Martin	Sr.	JC transfer hasn't lived up to hype his first two years.	D.J. Henderson, Sr.
NB	**Rashaan Gaulden***	Jr.	One of team's hardest hitters, good playmaker.	Baylen Buchanan, So.
SS	Nigel Warrior	So.	Great athlete; showing improved grasp of the system.	**Micah Abernathy, Jr.***
FS	**Todd Kelly Jr.***	Sr.	Has eight career picks; led team in tackles last year.	Evan Berry, Sr.
P	**Trevor Daniel***	Sr.	Former walk-on averaged 44.7 yards per punt.	Grayson Linde, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

Georgia. He even played defense when opponents reached back for a Hail Mary against Tennessee.

Senior Josh Smith has 58 career catches, 13 last season, but he's had trouble staying healthy and had two offseason surgeries. Tyler Byrd, Brandon Johnson and Marquez Callaway played as true freshmen but combined for just 23 catches, 15 by Byrd.

Tight end Ethan Wolf had 21 receptions but was plagued by several drops; he vowed to not have any this season. He enters his senior season with 67 career catches.

The offensive line has 111 combined career starts. It had moments when it played well but must be more consistent. True freshman Trey Smith emerged from spring ball as a starter at right tackle.

DEFENSE

Any hope that Tennessee's defense would be better last year than in 2015 was derailed by injuries. Two key defensive tackles were hurt; a starting tackle was suspended at midseason; linebackers Jalen Reeves-Maybin (four starts) and Darrin Kirkland Jr. (six starts) were sidelined; cornerback Cam Sutton suffered a broken foot, causing him to miss six games.

Coordinator Bob Shoop started 10 different lineups in the secondary, mostly due to injury.

A defense that played well for three quarters against Virginia Tech and shut down Florida in the second half turned into a sieve. Three of the final five SEC opponents rushed for at least 400 yards. Eleven opponents rushed for at least 100 yards. The defense allowed a school-record 740 yards to Missouri. Vanderbilt's Kyle Shurmur, an average quarterback at best, passed for 416 yards.

Tennessee ranked 104th in the nation against the run (218.5 per game) and allowed a whopping 5.1 yards per carry during the regular season.

Injuries, poor tackling, missed assignments, misalignments and lack of physicality led to the defensive downfall.

"We've got to be a better run defense," said Brady Hoke, the new defensive line coach. "That's a big part of what we do drill-wise and what we do every day."

However, in the spring, UT had only two healthy lettermen at defensive end and two healthy lettermen at tackle.

Ends Darrell Taylor and Jonathan Kongbo, and tackles Quay Picou and Paul Bain (a walk-on) were the returning lettermen up front. That wouldn't scare many SEC offenses. Junior college tackle Alexis Johnson, who couldn't get on the field last year despite UT's dire need for another tackle, improved this spring but needs to lose weight to be a solid contributor.

Tennessee will need defensive tackles Shy Tuttle, Kahlil McKenzie and Kendal Vickers to stay healthy if it wants to do battle with the better run teams it faces this year.

Kongbo has slimmed down from 285 to 265 and moved back to end from tackle, a position he reluctantly played last season.

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Todd Kelly, Jr.	**SS**	**5-11**	**208**	**4.58**	**Sr.**

Kelly Jr. is attempting to follow his famous father's footsteps at Tennessee and into the NFL. Like his father, who played for the Vols in the early 1990s and spent four seasons in the NFL, Kelly has shown a knack for big plays, recording eight interceptions over his first three seasons despite the fact that he has "only" started 15 of his 37 career games with the Vols.

Kelly is one of the better senior safeties in college and shows good awareness in coverage, reading the eyes of quarterbacks and showing body control and good hands for the interception. While possessing a solid frame, Kelly is not a particularly physical player, too often allowing his teammates to do the dirty work in run support.

Further, he needs to do a better job breaking down in space to make reliable tackles in the open field. The bloodlines and ball-skills are in place to project to the next level if Kelly commits to his craft in his senior season.

2. Darrin Kirkland, Jr.	**ILB**	**6-1**	**230**	**4.69**	**Jr.**
3. Coleman Thomas	**C**	**6-5**	**301**	**5.33**	**Sr.**
4. Kahlil McKenzie	**DT**	**6-3**	**325**	**5.08**	**Jr.**
5. Ethan Wolf	**TE**	**6-6**	**245**	**4.86**	**Sr.**

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

He has the ability to be an impact player. Tennessee hopes Kongbo will emerge to mitigate the loss of Barnett, who was not only UT's all-time sacks leader, but also a solid run stopper.

Shoop said athletic safety Nigel Warrior, seldom used last year, was the best defensive player during the first third of spring practice. Todd Kelly Jr. is a returning starter who led the team in tackles and is the leading returner in career interceptions (eight).

Safety Micah Abernathy, nickel Rashaan Gaulden and corner Emmanuel Moseley started last season. Justin Martin has eight starts in two seasons. Other potential starters are Marquill Osborne and Baylen Buchanan.

Last year, UT's defense allowed 74 plays of at least 20 yards, 19 of at least 40. Cutting down on splash plays was a point of emphasis in the spring.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Tennessee's special teams should again be strong. Evan Berry, who led the nation in kickoff returns (38.3 yards per attempt) in 2015, averaged 32.9 yards and scored one touchdown last season as teams kicked away from him. Wide receiver Marquez Callaway is the likely punt returner. He had just two chances last year, but ran one back for a 62-yard score.

After returning six kicks for touchdowns in 2015, UT had just two last season.

Punter Trevor Daniel, a former walk-on, is a weapon. He averaged 44.7 yards per punt last season after averaging 45.7 as a sophomore. Kicker Aaron Medley hit 11 of 16 field goal attempts; he's 43 of 48 inside 40 yards for his career, but only 9 of 25 from beyond, including 0 for 5 from 50-plus.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Tennessee faces another challenging schedule as nine teams played in bowl games last year and five won at least eight games: Georgia Tech, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, LSU. Tennessee opens Sept. 4 in Atlanta against Georgia Tech's tricky triple-option offense.

The Vols play both defending division champions on the road: Florida and Alabama. UT hosts LSU, which replaces Texas A&M as the other West opponent. Bad news: Jones has yet to defeat a West team in four years.

UT's other two SEC road games are at Kentucky and Missouri.

Besides LSU, the other home SEC games are Georgia, South Carolina and Vanderbilt. UT faces only three teams that had a winning SEC record last year.

— Jimmy Hyams

WR
Jauan Jennings
Photo by Joe Robbins

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.9	62
Rushing	146.4	89
Passing	224.2	70
Total	370.6	90
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.2	35
Rushing	168.4	T-65
Passing	196.2	22
Total	364.6	36
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+2	+0.15	T-53

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.2	29
Rushing	223.7	20
Passing	198.6	92
Total	422.3	52
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.0	16
Rushing	151.6	45
Passing	210.4	47
Total	362.0	36
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+7	+0.54	T-28

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.4	24
Rushing	205.2	37
Passing	238.5	62
Total	443.7	40
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.8	T-68
Rushing	218.5	104
Passing	230.7	72
Total	449.2	95
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-2	-0.15	T-78

NOTEBOOK

While **Butch Jones** said he had no timetable for announcing a starting quarterback, junior **Quinten Dormady** had the best spring game. He was 10-for-10 for 120 yards and two touchdowns. Redshirt freshman **Jarrett Guarantano** was 4-for-5 for 41 yards.

"The quarterbacks made tremendous progress," Jones said at the end of camp. "I've been pleased with the quarterback position all spring." Said Dormady: "That's always the goal, to go out and complete every ball and score points."

New quarterbacks coach **Mike Canales** did not dismiss the idea of having a two-quarterback system.

"Sure, why not?" he said. "You never know."

• UT gave out several spring awards. Best offensive teammate: **RB John Kelly**. Best defensive teammate: **DE Darrell Taylor**. Most improved offense: **TE Jakob Johnson**. Most improved defense: **CB Justin Martin**. Best mental and physical conditioning: **DT Quay Picou** and **WR Latrell Williams**. Best effort: **WR Marquez Callaway**.

"Callaway had as good a spring as anyone on the football team," Jones said.

• Tennessee held out 20 players from the spring game, some as a precaution, some who couldn't have gone due to injury. Five were offensive linemen, five were defensive linemen. Of those that missed the spring game, 14 are starters or potential starters.

• Guard **Jashon Robertson** was moved to center about a week into spring ball due to an appendectomy to center **Coleman Thomas**. He thinks playing a second position helps him overall as a lineman. Asked if he's as good at center as guard, Robertson said: "I would say to this point right now, I'm more comfortable with playing guard. Am I better at one or the other? I just think that's for the coaches to decide."

• Canales said he had "5-for-5" sessions to get to know his quarterbacks. They came to his office to talk for 5 minutes about any subject; he then talked for five minutes.

• UT had five mid-term enrollees, including **OL Trey Smith**, who emerged as the starting right tackle (although several OL were injured). **DE Deandre Johnson** worked up to the second team. **LB Shanon Reid** displayed athletic ability.

VOLUNTEERS SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
12 Quinten Dormady	QB	6-4	216	Jr.	Boerne, TX
2 Jarrett Guarantano	QB	6-4	205	Fr.	Lodi, NJ
14 Zac Jancek	QB	6-4	214	So.	Knoxville
13 Sheriron Jones	QB	6-2	208	So.	Perris, CA
7 Will McBride	QB	6-1	195	Fr.	League City, TX
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
35 Taeler Dowdy	RB	6-1	185	So.	Murfreesboro
27 Carlin Fils-aime	RB	5-11	175	So.	Naples, FL
4 John Kelly	RB	5-9	212	Jr.	Detroit, MI
31 Stedman Love	RB	5-8	175	So.	Knoxville
42 Chip Omer	RB	6-0	200	So.	Nashville
37 Jayson Sparks	RB	5-7	187	Jr.	Loganville, GA
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
83 BJ Bishop	WR	5-10	180	Fr.	Nashville
10 Tyler Byrd	WR	6-0	195	So.	Naples, FL
9 Marquez Callaway	WR	6-2	190	So.	Warner Robins, GA
87 Logan Fetzner	WR	5-9	182	Sr.	Cleveland
19 Jeff George	WR	6-6	195	Sr.	Leavenworth, KS
15 Jauan Jennings	WR	6-3	205	Jr.	Murfreesboro
17 Brandon Johnson	WR	6-2	180	So.	Plantation, FL
28 Will Martinez	WR	5-8	184	Jr.	Knoxville
85 Thomas Orradre	WR	6-2	205	Jr.	San Luis Obispo, CA
26 Ben Powlas	WR	6-5	205	So.	Dickson
38 Jaye Rochell	WR	6-2	210	Sr.	Duluth, GA
25 Josh Smith	WR	6-1	213	Sr.	Knoxville
8 Latrell Williams	WR	5-11	175	So.	Lake City, FL
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
86 Andrew Craig	TE	6-5	245	So.	Knoxville
44 Jakob Johnson	TE	6-3	250	Sr.	Stuttgart, Germany
89 Will Jumper	TE	6-2	206	So.	Lookout Mountain
81 Austin Pope	TE	6-4	230	So.	Knoxville
80 Eli Wolf	TE	6-4	216	So.	Minster, OH
82 Ethan Wolf	TE	6-6	245	Sr.	Minster, OH
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
50 Venzell Boulware	OL	6-3	306	So.	Union City, GA
77 Devante Brooks	OL	6-5	255	Fr.	Bowie, MD
79 Thomas Edwards	OL	6-4	315	Sr.	Kingsport
69 Brian Garvey	OL	6-4	295	So.	Brentwood
76 Chance Hall	OL	6-4	318	Jr.	Roanoke, VA
70 Ryan Johnson	OL	6-6	275	So.	Brentwood
66 Jack Jones	OL	6-4	307	Jr.	Murfreesboro
67 Joe Keeler	OL	6-6	275	So.	Arden, NC
63 Brett Kendrick	OL	6-6	318	Sr.	Knoxville
56 Riley Locklear	OL	6-5	295	Fr.	Huntington, WV
57 Nathan Niehaus	OL	6-6	295	So.	Cincinnati, OH
51 Drew Richmond	OL	6-5	301	So.	Memphis
75 Jashon Robertson	OL	6-3	305	Sr.	Nashville
60 Austin Sanders	OL	6-5	310	Sr.	Cleveland
73 Trey Smith	OL	6-6	313	Fr.	Humboldt
64 Tommy Sprague	OL	6-3	295	So.	Alpharetta, GA
68 Marcus Tatum	OL	6-6	265	So.	Ormond Beach, FL
55 Coleman Thomas	OL	6-5	301	Sr.	Max Meadows, VA
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
97 Paul Bain	DL	6-5	290	Jr.	Powder Springs, GA
88 Brandon Benedict	DL	6-2	260	Fr.	Nashville
96 Joey Cave	DL	6-5	285	So.	Knoxville
98 Alexis Johnson	DL	6-4	295	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
13 Deandre Johnson	DL	6-4	235	Fr.	Miami, FL
1 Jonathan Kongbo	DL	6-6	265	Jr.	Surrey, B.C.
94 Mykelle McDaniel	DL	6-3	220	So.	Loganville, GA
99 Reginald Kahlil McKenzie Jr.	DL	6-3	325	Jr.	Walnut Creek, CA
5 Kyle Phillips	DL	6-4	259	Jr.	Nashville
55 Quay Picou	DL	6-1	277	Jr.	Sugar Hill, GA
11 Austin Smith	DL	6-3	236	Jr.	Buford, GA
19 Darrell Taylor	DL	6-4	240	So.	Waverly, VA
2 Shy Tuttle	DL	6-2	311	Jr.	Midway, NC
39 Kendal Vickers	DL	6-3	295	Sr.	Havelock, NC
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
43 Matt Ballard	LB	6-1	215	Fr.	Clarksville
17 Dillon Bates	LB	6-3	220	Jr.	Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
41 Elliott Berry	LB	5-11	222	Sr.	Fairburn, GA
35 Daniel Bituli	LB	6-3	235	So.	Antioch
48 Ja'Quain Blakely	LB	6-2	230	Fr.	Moultrie, GA
36 Gavin Bryant	LB	6-0	238	Jr.	Jackson, AL
53 Colton Jumper	LB	6-2	224	Jr.	Lookout Mountain
34 Darrin Kirkland Jr.	LB	6-1	230	Jr.	Indianapolis, IN
47 Landon Knoll	LB	6-3	217	So.	Nashville
46 DaJour Maddox	LB	5-11	210	So.	Stone Mountain, GA
20 Cortez McDowell	LB	6-0	235	Sr.	Locust Grove, GA
21 Shanon Reid	LB	6-0	205	Fr.	Lehigh Acres, FL
14 Quart'e Sapp	LB	6-2	220	So.	Alpharetta, GA
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
22 Micah Abernathy	DB	6-0	195	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
29 Evan Berry	DB	5-11	207	Sr.	Fairburn, GA
28 Baylen Buchanan	DB	5-11	190	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
33 MaLeik Gatewood	DB	5-10	193	So.	Memphis
7 Rashaan Gaulden	DB	6-1	185	Jr.	Spring Hill
26 Stephen Griffin	DB	6-2	205	Jr.	Charlotte, NC
38 D.J. Henderson	DB	6-1	180	Sr.	Lyman, SC
24 Todd Kelly Jr.	DB	5-11	208	Sr.	Knoxville
8 Justin Martin	DB	6-1	183	Sr.	Antioch
12 Emmanuel Moseley	DB	5-11	180	Sr.	Greensboro, NC
3 Marquill Osborne	DB	5-11	188	So.	Cornelius, NC
18 Nigel Warrior	DB	6-0	186	So.	Duluth, GA
37 Charles West	DB	6-2	170	So.	Nashville
30 Devin Williams	DB	5-8	184	Sr.	Knoxville
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
93 Trevor Daniel	P	6-1	248	Sr.	Dickson
30 Holden Foster	PK	6-0	205	Sr.	Dickson
31 Parker Henry	H	6-1	185	Jr.	Hendersonville
39 Alex Jones	H	5-5	139	So.	Knoxville
36 Grayson Linde	P	6-1	180	So.	Brentwood
46 Riley Lovingood	LS	6-0	209	So.	Hendersonville
52 Elijah Medford	LS	5-9	203	Jr.	Burlington, NC
25 Aaron Medley	PK	6-2	194	Sr.	Lewisburg
97 Jackson Morris	PK	5-9	165	So.	Hendersonville
64 Logan Punch	LS	6-0	230	So.	Knoxville
43 Laszlo Toser	PK	5-8	181	So.	Ooltewah
59 Jake Yelich	LS	6-2	225	So.	Crown Point, IN

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the program:** "When you're in your fourth year and the defense is that bad, that ain't good. The thing about Tennessee this year, they don't have a quarterback, they don't have a running back, and for all those guys they've signed, I don't see any dominant, draftable players.

"A part of me says Butch Jones has done a good job. A part of me says no. I think he's too concerned with what the media says than doing his job. If you win, the media doesn't matter. If you lose, everything matters. I think he gets caught up in public opinion. I think he's an insecure guy.

"Tennessee hasn't won 10 games (since 2007). No way they should go 10 years at Tennessee and not win 10-11 games. No way. That's an indictment on the coaches, the school, the president. You have the resources, the fan passion, the stadium, the financial commitment."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Dobbs	13	150.6	225	357	12	63.0	2946	27	67	226.6
Q. Dormady	4	137.8	11	17	0	64.7	148	0	36	37.0

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Malone	13	50	972	19.4	11	67	74.8
J. Jennings	13	40	580	14.5	7	67	44.6
A. Kamara	11	40	392	9.8	4	53	35.6

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Dobbs	13	150	1093	262	831	5.5	12	70	63.9
J. Kelly	12	98	644	14	630	6.4	5	73	52.5
A. Kamara	11	103	616	20	596	5.8	9	39	54.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: T. Kelly 71, M. Abernathy 69, R. Gaulden 68
Tackles for loss: D. Barnett 19, C. Vereen 11.5, two tied with 6
Sacks: D. Barnett 13, C. Vereen 7, K. Vickers 2.5, L. Lewis 2.5
Interceptions: T. Kelly 2, M. Abernathy 2, seven tied with 1

247SPORTS VOLUNTEERS RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Trey Smith, OL

The 6-6, 313-pound five-star recruit enrolled early and went through spring drills. The talented tackle likely earned a starting job after an impressive spring showing. Smith shows heavy hands on his initial punch and has elite mobility for an offensive lineman.

Ty Chandler, RB

The speedy 5-11, 190-pound four-star recruit is another that likely earns snaps his first year on campus. Chandler is not the most physically imposing ball carrier, but the way he knifes through the slightest of openings is impressive. He is also an effective pass catcher out of the backfield.

Maleik Gray, S

The 6-2, 190-pound four-star recruit spent much of his high school career playing linebacker, but look for him to move back to safety for the Vols. Gray brings great length to the secondary and flashed impressive speed to cover a lot of ground on the back end of the defense.

SLEEPER

Matthew Butler, DT

Look for the 6-4, 285-pound prospect to become a disruptive force as a three-technique defensive tackle. The three-star recruit played end in high school, and still has the quickness needed to play on the edge. However, the bulk Butler has added to his frame will help him on the interior of the defensive line.

2018 NEEDS

Tennessee loses a pair of tight ends after the season, so replacing the depth at that position is important in this next recruiting cycle. The Vols also might need to sign a pair of quarterbacks depending on how that depth chart shakes out this fall.

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star
1	7	18	1

Commitments	27
Average Stars	3.30
Total Stars	89
National Rank: 17	SEC: 7

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Terrell Bailey	CB	5-11	180	✪✪✪	Harvey, LA	John Ehret
247Sports.com rated No. 49 cornerback nationally and No. 19 player in Louisiana… As a junior, helped team to state championship game.						
Marquez Bembry	DE	6-2	215	✪✪✪	Stone Mountain, GA	Mt. Vernon Presbyterian
Ranked No. 39 athlete nationally and No. 54 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Suffered knee injury early in senior season… As a junior, had 110 tackles and 20 quarterback sacks.						
Kivon Bennett	DT	6-2	285	✪✪✪	Hollywood, FL	St. Thomas Aquinas
247Sports.com rated No. 40 defensive tackle nationally and No. 65 player in Florida… Helped team to three consecutive state championships… As a senior, had 31 tackles, three quarterback sacks and eight quarterback hurries.						
James Brown	TE	6-4	220	✪✪✪	Orlando, FL	Jones
Ranked No. 71 tight end nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 11 receptions for 201 yards and four touchdowns as a senior… Had 170 yards rushing and three touchdowns on 15 carries.						
LaTrell Bumphus	TE	6-4	245	✪✪✪	Savannah	Hardin County
247Sports.com rated No. 26 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 12 player in Tennessee.						
Matthew Butler	DT	6-4	285	✪✪✪✪	Raleigh, NC	Garner Senior
Ranked No. 36 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 12 player in North Carolina by 247Sports.com… As a senior, had 96 tackles, including 44 tackles for loss, 26 quarterback sacks and 36 quarterback hurries.						
K'Rojhn Calbert	OT	6-5	300	✪✪✪	McMinnville	Warren County Senior
247Sports.com rated No. 62 offensive tackle nationally and No. 20 player in Tennessee… All-State… Limited playing time in first three seasons due to knee injuries.						
Ty Chandler	RB	5-11	190	✪✪✪✪	Nashville	Montgomery Bell Academy
Ranked No. 5 running back and No. 68 player nationally and No. 5 player in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Had 6,158 career yards rushing and 92 touchdowns… Had 2,252 yards rushing and 39 touchdowns as a senior.						
Brent Cimaglia	K	6-0	215	✪✪	Franklin	Fred J. Page
247Sports.com rated No. 3 kicker nationally and No. 34 player in Tennessee… As a senior, made six of 11 field goals attempted and 31 of 31 extra points attempted.						
Trey Coleman	RB	5-11	215	✪✪✪	West Monroe, LA	West Monroe
Ranked No. 44 running back nationally and No. 23 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Had 1,369 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns as a senior… Had 10 receptions for 171 yards and three touchdowns.						
Eric Crosby	DT	6-1	325	✪✪✪✪	Virginia Beach, VA	Ocean Lakes
247Sports.com rated No. 12 defensive tackle and No. 7 player in Virginia… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… As a junior, had 50 tackles, three quarterback sacks, two fumbles caused and one fumble recovered.						
Maleik Gray	S	6-2	190	✪✪✪✪	LaVergne	LaVergne
Ranked No. 10 safety and No. 78 player nationally and No. 6 player in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 53 tackles, including 13 tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks, and three fumbles caused as a junior.						
Will Ignont	LB	6-2	230	✪✪✪✪	Huntsville, AL	Buckhorn
247Sports.com rated No. 16 inside linebacker nationally and No. 15 player in Alabama… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… As a senior, had 131 tackles, including 22 tackles for loss.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Theo Jackson	S	6-2	175	✪✪✪	Nashville	Overton
Ranked No. 37 safety nationally and No. 17 player in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… Had five interceptions as a senior… As a junior, 33 tackles and three interceptions.						
Deandre Johnson	DE	6-4	235	✪✪✪	Miami, FL	Miami Southridge Senior
247Sports.com rated No. 44 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 102 player in Florida… As a senior, helped team to 12-2 record and state championship… Had 15 quarterback sacks.						
Jacquez Jones	WR	5-10	165	✪✪✪	Clearwater, FL	Clearwater
Ranked No. 133 wide receiver nationally and No. 126 player in Florida by 247Sports.com… Had 57 receptions for 1,004 yards and 10 touchdowns as a senior… Had 244 yards rushing and four touchdowns on 23 carries.						
Tim Jordan	RB	6-0	190	✪✪✪	Winterhaven, FL	Bartow
247Sports.com rated No. 88 running back nationally… As a senior, had 1,300 yards rushing and 13 touchdowns.						
Cheyenne Labruzza	CB	5-11	190	✪✪✪	Albany, LA	Albany
Ranked No. 44 cornerback nationally and No. 16 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Scored 10 touchdowns before suffering a torn meniscus in senior season.						
Riley Locklear	OL	6-5	295	✪✪✪	Huntington, WV	Spring Valley
247Sports.com rated No. 62 offensive tackle nationally and No. 3 player in West Virginia… Two-time All-State.						
Will McBride	QB	6-1	195	✪✪✪	League City, TX	Clear Springs
Ranked No. 28 dual-threat quarterback nationally and No. 183 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Had 5,714 career yards total offense and 69 touchdowns in three seasons.						
Jordan Murphy	WR	5-11	170	✪✪✪✪	Hattiesburg, MS	Hattiesburg
247Sports.com rated No. 50 wide receiver nationally and No. 8 player in Mississippi… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… As a senior, had 78 receptions for 1,695 yards and 21 TD's.						
Solon Page, III	LB	6-2	205	✪✪✪	Marietta, GA	Kell
Ranked No. 38 outside linebacker nationally and No. 60 player in Georgia by 247Sports.com… Had 178 tackles (123 solo), including 23 tackles for loss, two quarterback sacks, one interception, and four fumbles caused as a senior.						
Josh Palmer	WR	6-2	200	✪✪✪	Brampton, Ontario	St. Thomas Aquinas (FL)
247Sports.com rated No. 120 wide receiver nationally and No. 111 player in Florida… As a senior, helped team to state championship… Had 32 receptions for 506 yards and eight touchdowns.						
Shanon Reid	LB	6-0	205	✪✪✪✪	Lehigh Acres, FL	Dunbar
Ranked No. 42 outside linebacker nationally and No. 81 player in Florida by 247Sports.com.						
Shawn Shamburger	CB	5-11	190	✪✪✪	Moultrie, GA	Colquitt County
Had 51 tackles (42 solo), including three tackles for loss, five interceptions, and seven passes broken up as a senior… Had nine receptions for 110 yards and one touchdown.						
Trey Smith	OL	6-6	313	✪✪✪✪✪	Humboldt	University School of Jackson
USA Today All-American… 247Sports.com rated No. 4 offensive tackle and No. 14 player nationally and No. 1 player in Tennessee… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Two-time Tennessee Mr. Football.						
Ryan Thaxton	DE	6-4	220	✪✪✪	Alexandria, VA	St. Stephen's and St. Agnes
Ranked No. 40 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 23 player in Virginia by 247Sports.com.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Kongbo finding new home on Rocky Top

When Tennessee won a hotly contested battle to sign defensive end Jonathan Kongbo, the fan base rejoiced. Kongbo would surely make an immediate impact on an already solid defensive line.

The native of Canada was the No. 1 ranked junior college player in the country. He was a chiseled 6-5, 260-pounder with 4.69 speed and untapped potential. He was a weight room warrior. And he was confident, pumping iron with a sign next to him that read: Beat Bama.

But Kongbo's first year at Rocky Top was rather ... rocky. He had trouble cracking the lineup at defensive end, and when injuries decimated the tackle position, he didn't buy into the move inside. His production didn't match his hype.

His one shining moment came when he intercepted a pass against Missouri and returned it 59 yards for a touchdown.

Otherwise, he contributed 11 tackles, one for a loss, and had seven quarterback hurries.

"I let it get to me too much, the pressure and what everyone expected," Kongbo said. "I feel different coming in this year. I am not really paying attention to all that."

While Kongbo didn't embrace the move from end to tackle, he said he "learned a lot" and it helped him become more physical.

Kongbo played just one year of high school football in Surrey, British Columbia. He signed with Wyoming, redshirted, then transferred to Arizona Western Community College, where he blew up as a prospect. But the lack of playing time made life in the SEC that much tougher.

"It was definitely a big learning experience coming in and never playing in the SEC," Kongbo said. "It will definitely wake you up when you are there as far as going up against better athletes."

Kongbo has lost weight, going from 285 to 265, and has moved back to his natural position — defensive end.

New defensive line coach Brady Hoke likes what he sees.

DL
Jonathan Kongbo
Photo by Bryan Lynn/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

"He's making progress every day," Hoke said. "It's always hard for junior college guys getting thrown into the mix a long way from home."

Said Kongbo: "I feel like I am finally at home."

Kongbo created chaos last fall when he posted a picture on Twitter of cleats hanging from laces with the caption: "All things must come to an end."

He was referring to losing a FIFA video game — not quitting UT.

"As far as people's reaction, it is Tennessee right?" Kongbo said. "Should have known."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/tennessee

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

WR JAUAN JENNINGS

The "alpha male" among the receivers, Jennings is the best competitor on the team. ... Made miraculous Hail Mary catch to beat Georgia in Athens. ... Was also key in a victory at Florida, with three catches for 111 yards, including a 67-yard touchdown. His fourth-quarter score gave the Vols the lead as they went on to win 38-28. ... Caught 40 passes for 580 yards and seven touchdowns. ... Excellent blocker ... Could develop into All-SEC player.

EMERGING STAR

DB NIGEL WARRIOR

Son of former UT All-American Dale Carter, Warrior is the best athlete in the secondary. ... Had trouble getting on the field last year because he didn't know the system, but he did finish with 22 tackles and earned SEC All-Freshman team honors. ... Got his first start late in the season against Missouri and tied his career-best with seven tackles. ... Runs well, packs a powerful punch.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB TY CHANDLER

UT needs a No. 2 running back and this true freshman has the skills to play right away. ... The 5-11, 190-pounder made second-team *USA Today* All-American. ... Ranks fifth in the state of Tennessee high school record books in career rushing yards (7,068) and is second in touchdowns (107). ... Was rated the No. 1 running back in Tennessee, No. 5 in nation, in the 247Sports Composite. ... Was No. 68 overall nationally.

KEEPING *the* FAITH

BY BILL SORRELL

HUNTER RENFROW

THROUGH GOD, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

In the skies far from Arizona, Hunter Renfrow made a phone call that, somewhat, doubled life's pleasure and responsibility.

While with his Clemson teammates on the way to play Ohio State in the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Renfrow called a breeder in Asheville, N.C., to reserve a Golden Retriever puppy.

"This dog has been keeping me busy," said Renfrow, who experienced the greatest sky-high moment in his football career, going from walk-on to Clemson legend.

With the Tigers on Alabama's 2-yard line with one second to play in the 2016 National Championship Game, Renfrow caught a touchdown pass from Deshaun Watson to give Clemson a 35-31 victory and its second national championship.

It was the second consecutive year for Clemson to reach the national title game and, after his two-yard game-winner, Renfrow named his puppy Deuce.

"It (the name) was a combination of a lot of things. It was cool how it came to fruition," said Renfrow.

Cool-headed was how Renfrow lined up in what he called the "defining moment" of the game and season.

"I didn't want to let my teammates and coaches down," he said. "I wanted to give it my all on that play. I remember thinking I have done this in practice a thousand times. So I am standing there, I don't want to get outleveraged by the defender. I know that Artavis Scott would do his job and get in the way a little. I could rub against him and get free for a touchdown. I envisioned in spring practice doing that play. Dormant grass is what popped in my mind. I visualized dormant grass."

Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney said, "The moment he caught the winning pass epitomizes our program ... the 5-star quarterback (Watson) throwing the game-winner to the walk-on wide-out (Renfrow)."

Renfrow said that he could not describe the feeling when he caught the pass.

"It's something that I can't put into words. I dreamed about it my entire life."

Renfrow did not toss up a prayer before the play.

"I am always talking to God throughout the game," he said. "When I lined up, I knew it was in God's control that whatever His plan for this play was better than mine, whether I dropped it or I caught it, it was not going to define me as a person."

During a nationally televised postgame interview, Renfrow said that his faith in God got him to Clemson and to that point in life.

"It's all about Him," he said. "If we had lost the game, it would still have been about Him. It was the comfort and not the pressure of the game. There are far more important things in life. Whenever your dad is sick or you don't know where your next meal is coming from, that is pressure."

Sports Illustrated published a photograph of the reception on its cover. Watson (No. 4) was in the background after throwing the pass and Renfrow (No. 13) was stepping into the end zone.

Signing more than 2,200 copies of the cover, Renfrow puts the Bible verse Philippians 4:13 beside his name, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

"It's never I am a football player who is a Christian," he explained. "I am a Christian who plays football. This is how I try to live. God comes first on my priority list.

"Jesus means everything. If football ended tomorrow or I had a storm come up in my life, He is going to be steadfast and is always going to be there for me. I don't have many worries knowing that God has been here forever and is going to be there forever. I know if I caught five touchdown passes or fumbled five times, God is going to love me the same.

"Jesus is why I have been able to achieve my goals. The pressure would have been insurmountable. Football is a great game, but it doesn't bring happiness and fulfillment like God does. I think God's purpose for me is to go and make disciples of all nations, that is what He says in the Bible, and to reflect Him in everything I do.

"In a time where satisfaction in the moment is so prevalent, I can show God's steadfast love to everyone."

Teammate Darien Rencher, a running back from Anderson, S.C., attends Bible studies with Renfrow.

"Hunter lives out his faith by working excellently," Rencher said. "The Bible is clear on allowing your peers to see the evidence of your faith in the quality of your work and his career thus far backs that up. He's not the most vocal, but he makes up for it leading by example. He is definitely an inspiration because he shows what hard work and good techniques can get you."

Said Renfrow, "If I wasn't a Christian, I would not be at Clemson."

Before his senior year at Socastee High School in Myrtle Beach, S.C., where he was coached three seasons by his father, Tim Renfrow, Hunter attended a Clemson football camp. While he had full scholarship offers from Furman and Appalachian State, he would have walk-on status at Clemson.

On the ride home, he began to tear up considering the situation.

"I always wanted to play with the best in the country and not wonder if I was good enough," he said. "I realized this could be a stepping point in my life.

"Thirty minutes into the ride home, I wiped my tears and put a smile on my face, excited to have the opportunity to earn a scholarship instead of being given one," said Renfrow, who caught a career-high 10 passes against Alabama, the most against the Tide in four years. He caught seven passes in the 2015 national championship game against them.

"Another thing from my relationship with God, it felt right," he said. "Coach Swinney is a Christian as well. They try to lead this program in that manner. For me to grow as a believer and as a man, I thought it was the right place for me."

Earning a scholarship before the 2015 season, Renfrow (5-11, 180) has kept the faith.

"There wasn't a low point. I never remember being discouraged or feeling I couldn't do it. I always believed that I could play at this level. If I wasn't good enough, it was not going to be the end of the road for me. I still had so much more at Clemson," said Renfrow.

Said Watson, "The sky's been the limit for him."

Hunter Renfrow

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

For more coverage of the Aggies, visit tamu.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Noel Mazzone **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** John Chavis **STADIUM:** Kyle Field: 106,300

IN CRITICAL YEAR, AGGIES HOPING TO FLEX IN NOVEMBER

Texas A&M and Texas haven't played since 2011, but a year ago the media dubbed the off-field competition between the Aggies' Kevin Sumlin and then-Texas coach Charlie Strong as "The Tom Herman Sweepstakes."

As in where would Herman land should either or both coaches falter.

About six months later there was a clear answer: Herman, who'd led the University of Houston to prominence in only two seasons, wound up at Texas following another losing season by the Longhorns under Strong.

The Aggies stayed pat with Sumlin, for at least into early November, for what was a good reason: They were winning. A&M was fourth in the first College Football Playoff rankings last November, before another late-season collapse left Sumlin befuddled and A&M fans once again fired up.

A&M finished 8-5 for a third consecutive season. In the past, Sumlin has demoted an offensive coordinator, fired another one and fired a defensive coordinator to try to shake things up. This time, he chased off longtime strength coach Larry Jackson and replaced him with Mark Hocke, a former Alabama assistant strength coach, former Georgia head strength coach and, most recently, an assistant strength coach at Florida State.

"We're developing a new identity, developing a new attitude, a new brand of toughness and new brand of accountability," Hocke said. "Everything that Coach Sumlin said he wanted out of this team, that's what we're getting after right now."

Hocke was part of three national champions at Alabama. As for the players he inherited at A&M?

"This team has been great," he said.

"They're working hard. They've bought in. They're competing. They've really set a new standard and a new culture. That's what we've been focused on and working on the last couple of months. Coach Sumlin said he wants not to count the days, but to make the days count.

"That's what we've been trying to do since we got here."

Sumlin's goal in hiring Hocke was trying to avoid a fourth consecutive November collapse. The Aggies are 2-7 against SEC foes in that month over the past three seasons.

"Mark has been around championship programs," Sumlin said. "That's what we're aiming to be."

OFFENSE

Texas A&M will break in a new starting quarterback in the season opener for a fourth consecutive year. It's going to be senior Jake Hubenak, redshirt freshman Nick Starkel or true freshman Kellen Mond.

"They all want that job, and they're all working their butts off for it," junior receiver Christian Kirk said.

Based on spring drills and overall progress, Starkel is the likely frontrunner heading into camp. A handful of longtime observers around A&M are comparing the tall, rangy Starkel to former A&M standout Ryan Tannehill, the Miami Dolphins quarterback. Like Tannehill, Starkel owns an extremely strong arm and isn't afraid to sling the ball around.

Any of the trio should have a solid group of running backs to help alleviate the pressure. Senior banger Keith Ford will make a hole in a defense if necessary, and high-revving sophomore Trayveon Williams can scoot in and around defensive fronts.

While the Aggies lost a handful of starting receivers — primarily Josh Reynolds — Sumlin once again has recruited lights out at the position, and freshmen Jhamon Ausbon, Roshauud Paul and Hezekiah Jones all will get the chance to shine early.

Ausbon, in particular, looked like he belonged during the Aggies' spring drills and spring game.

"Physically, he's where he needs to be," Sumlin said. "He already looks like he's been here two or three years."

The Aggies will need all the firepower they can muster at the skill positions, considering the line has plenty of questions entering the season. A&M lost starting tackles Avery Gennesy and Jermaine Eluemunor to the NFL from a line that got manhandled at times last season by SEC defenses.

Junior Koda Martin is expected to lock down left tackle, while the other side likely will go to Keaton Sutherland — at least for

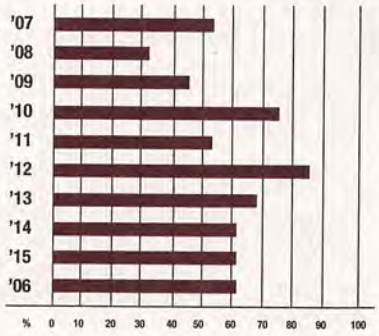
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 3	at UCLA	4-8
Sept. 9	NICHOLLS STATE	5-6
Sept. 16	LOUISIANA	6-7
Sept. 23	vs. Arkansas (Arlington, TX)	7-6
Sept. 30	SOUTH CAROLINA	6-7
Oct. 7	ALABAMA	14-1
Oct. 14	at Florida	9-4
Oct. 28	MISSISSIPPI STATE	6-7
Nov. 4	AUBURN	8-5
Nov. 11	NEW MEXICO	9-4
Nov. 18	at Ole Miss	5-7
Nov. 25	at LSU	8-4

RESULTS

8-5, 4-4		
W	UCLA (OT)	31-24
W	PRAIRIE VIEW A&M	67-0
W	at Auburn	29-16
W	vs. Arkansas (Arlington, TX)	45-24
W	at South Carolina	24-13
W	TENNESSEE (2OT)	45-38
L	at Alabama	14-33
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	52-10
L	at Mississippi State	28-35
L	OLE MISS	28-29
W	UTSA	23-10
L	LSU	39-54
	Texas Bowl	
L	vs. Kansas State	28-33

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
College Station, Texas

2016:
8-5, 4-4 SEC (4th, West)

COACH:
Kevin Sumlin — At Texas A&M: 44-21, 5 years; overall: 79-38, 9 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
14; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Trayveon Williams, WR Christian Kirk, WR Jhamon Ausbon, OT Koda Martin, DE Micheal Clemons, DT Kingsley Keke, SS Donovan Wilson, FS Armani Watts

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Defensive tackle is the team's most solid unit behind Keke and Zaycoven Henderson. Sumlin has always done an excellent job of recruiting receivers, and the young guns, led by Ausbon, will earn every chance to make an impression early. Safety has been a strength for several seasons.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The Aggies are rail thin at defensive end, and the talent at the position is questionable as well in the absence of Myles Garrett and Daeshon Hall. The offensive line wasn't very good last season — and then lost its starting tackles to the NFL. The returning cornerbacks have their share of burn marks from last season.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Trevor Knight, WR Josh Reynolds, OT Avery Gennesy, OT Jermaine Eluemunor, DE Myles Garrett, DE Daeshon Hall, SS Justin Evans

OVERVIEW:
Sumlin's job was considered in jeopardy a year ago, but a solid showing into early November cooled those engines. Then the Aggies' wheels rolled off, and they lost four of five to close out another disappointing year. A&M's brass and boosters are keeping a close eye on Sumlin's progress into December this season, not just November. The Aggies' toughest schedule in years doesn't help his cause.

KEY NUMBER:
2 Years remaining on Sumlin's contract after this season, and A&M probably won't extend his deal until the results are in from 2017.

WR Christian KIRK

Photo by Daniel Dunn/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

RB
Trayveon Williams
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Nick Starkel	Fr.	Strong arm and smart but raw. Battle resumes in fall.	Jake Hubenak, Sr.
RB	**Trayveon Williams***	So.	Rushed for 217 yards against Tennessee.	Keith Ford, Sr.
WR	**Christian Kirk***	Jr.	Team leader who sets an example on and off field.	Roshauud Paul, Fr.
WR	Damion Ratley	Sr.	Exceptional athlete, but has been inconsistent.	Hezekiah Jones, Fr.
WR	Jhamon Ausbon	Fr.	Looked like a grown man during spring drills.	Quartney Davis, Fr.
TE	Kalvin Cline	Sr.	Ideal size for his position, but underutilized in 2016.	Camron Horry, Fr.
LT	Koda Martin	Jr.	Highly recruited and appears ready to blossom.	Tank Davis, Jr.
LG	**Erik McCoy***	So.	Converted from center; better size for a guard.	Austin Anderson, So.
C	**Colton Prater***	So.	Converted from guard, better size for a center.	Erik McCoy, So.
RG	**Connor Lanfear***	Jr.	Knee injury ended his season after eight games in 2016.	Austin Anderson, So.
RT	Keaton Sutherland	Jr.	Mostly played guard in college until now.	Tank Davis, Jr.
PK	**Daniel LaCamera***	Jr.	Made 17 of 24 on season; strong leg but 0-2 from 50+.	Braden Mann, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Jarrett Johnson	Sr.	Had 4.5 sacks last season in limited role.	Qualen Cunningham, Sr.
DT	**Zaycoven Henderson***	Sr.	Half of the Aggies' most dependable position.	Daylon Mack, Jr.
DT	**Kingsley Keke***	Jr.	Other half of the Aggies' most dependable position.	Daylon Mack, Jr.
DE	Micheal Clemons	So.	Junior college transfer expected to make quick impact.	Qualen Cunningham, Sr.
LB	Tyrel Dodson	So.	Showed flashes of playmaking as freshman.	Richard Moore, Jr.
LB	**Otaro Alaka***	Jr.	Steady and smart but must stay healthy.	Dwaine Thomas, Jr.
LB	Anthony Hines	Fr.	Touted newcomer aiming for instant impact.	Richard Moore, Jr.
CB	**Priest Willis***	Sr.	UCLA transfer is still adjusting in Aggieland.	Roney Elam, So.
CB	**Nick Harvey***	Sr.	Swift with the occasional big play, but gave up too many.	Charles Oliver, So.
SS	Larry Pryor	So.	Hard hitter who earned valuable playing time as freshman.	**Donovan Wilson, Sr.***
FS	**Armani Watts***	Sr.	Leader on defense returning from hamstring injury.	Donovan Wilson, Sr.
P	**Shane Tripucka***	Sr.	Former walk-on who persevered and excelled as a junior.	Braden Mann, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

starters. Erik McCoy, who had too many floating snaps last season, likely is shifting from center to guard, and guard Colton Prater will earn a long look at center.

Sumlin is counting on former Miami Dolphins offensive line coach Jim Turner, who also had a successful stint at A&M under then-coach Mike Sherman, to whip this group into shape in a hurry.

Second-year offensive coordinator Noel Mazzone has pledged to work the tight end more into the scheme, and an intriguing newcomer on that front is Camron Horry, son of former NBA long-range specialist and playoff hero Robert Horry.

Tight end had become an endangered species around Aggieland over the past decade, but Sumlin is counting on Horry to pump some life into the position.

Sumlin entered the SEC five years ago with a high-octane, wide-open offense, but he's tried slowing things down of late with the idea of giving his defense a little more time off. That's where the likes of Horry and this old-fangled position of tight end can help.

DEFENSE

Defensive coordinator John Chavis had plenty of reason to smile on the night of April 27, when former A&M defensive end Myles Garrett became the first Aggie in history selected No. 1 overall in the NFL Draft.

"Myles will make the city of Cleveland very, very happy," Chavis vowed of the latest Browns player trying to change that franchise's fortunes.

Meanwhile, Chavis is trying to do the same with the A&M defense, and so far he's had little luck entering his third season — and that's made the Aggies faithful unhappy. Chavis worked wonders at his previous stops of Tennessee and LSU, and the Aggies are still hopeful some of that toughness and aggressiveness will kick in.

A&M took a big step backward last season, finishing 90th in total defense after finishing 51st in Chavis' first season with the unit formerly known as the Wrecking Crew.

"It's about winning, we all know that," Chavis said of his expectations at A&M. "You can't run from it."

The Aggies have huge questions at defensive end, considering they lost Garrett and fellow end Daeshon Hall to the NFL. Together they accounted for 48.5 sacks over the past three seasons, and now A&M will count on Qualen Cunningham and Jarrett Johnson to try and fill those four sizable cleats. Johnson, in limited playing time, tied Hall for second on the defense with 4.5 sacks last season.

The Aggies also will count on immediate contributions from Micheal Clemons, one of the top-rated defensive ends in junior college last season. No doubt, A&M is thin at end, but that's slightly offset by the defense's deepest position: defensive tackle.

Zaycoven Henderson, Kingsley Keke and

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Christian Kirk	**WR**	**5-11**	**200**	**4.39**	**Jr.**

The NFL loves playmakers and Kirk is certainly that, scoring a total of 16 touchdowns as a receiver over his first two seasons at College Station and returning three punts for scores last year alone. He had two punt-return TDs as a freshman.

Kirk signed with Texas A&M amid significant fanfare as the Gatorade Player of the Year for the state of Arizona and proved an immediate difference-maker, leading the team in receptions (80), receiving yards (1,009) and all-purpose yardage (1,789) in 2015.

Opposing cornerbacks are forced to play on their heels to respect Kirk's straight-line speed and he is a menace on short and intermediate routes, utilizing the vision, stop-start quickness and toughness to bounce off would-be tacklers to create yards after the catch.

Though he lacks the height scouts would prefer, Kirk possesses a compact frame and good overall musculature that projects well to the next level. And the hype only figures to grow once he gets in front of scouts, because he should test off-the-charts.

2. Armani Watts	**FS**	**5-11**	**205**	**4.49**	**Sr.**
3. Shane Tripucka	**P**	**6-3**	**220**	**4.94**	**Sr.**
4. Kingsley Keke	**DT**	**6-4**	**300**	**5.23**	**Jr.**
5. Otaro Alaka	**ILB**	**6-3**	**240**	**4.78**	**Jr.**

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

Daylon Mack all own plenty of experience at the position, and one or two might even shift out to end occasionally to help out when necessary.

"We know we can hold it down for the whole defense," Keke said. "We want to cause havoc and be disruptive on every single play."

As for those ends who have to fill in for Garrett and Hall?

"They're hustling their hearts out," Keke said. "That's what they're doing to show they can play."

The Aggies also lost hard-hitting safety Justin Evans to the NFL, so they'll need senior Donovan Wilson to play like he did in 2015, when he led the defense with five interceptions. Safety Armani Watts might be the defense's best player, but must show he can stay healthy this season after missing four games last year.

A&M returns veteran cornerbacks Priest Willis and Nick Harvey, but neither excelled at locking down receivers last season. Sophomores Roney Elam and Charles Oliver will be given every chance to earn playing time at corner, as well.

Chavis, who coaches linebackers, finally has some depth at the position. Touted freshman Anthony Hines should make an immediate impact, and sophomore Tyrel Dodson gained valuable experience last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Aggies have taken their hits on offense and defense from last year's roster, but special teams is back in nearly full force.

Christian Kirk is one of the best punt returners in the nation, and punter Shane Tripucka and kicker Daniel LaCamera showed off strong, steady legs all last season. Kirk might also return a kick or two, and Keith Ford likely will get that opportunity, as well, just as he did last season. With last year's top kick returner, Justin Evans, off to the NFL, Kendall Bussey and Trayveon Williams also will earn their opportunities in camp to take over that gig.

QB **Jake Hubenak**

Photo by Troy Taormina-USA TODAY Sports

Kirk would have led the nation in punt return average last season (21.7 yards) had he returned enough to qualify.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Playing an SEC West schedule is always a rugged go, but a couple of additions to the calendar make that slate even tougher. Just what Sumlin needed.

A&M opens at UCLA, and it took overtime for the Aggies to beat the Bruins at Kyle Field last season. The Aggies' SEC East foe this season, outside of annual cross-division opponent South Carolina? At Florida on Oct. 14, home of the reigning East division champs.

A&M also is still trying to beat Alabama for the first time since the Aggies' first season in the SEC in 2012 (it seemed so easy at the time); the Crimson Tide roll into Kyle Field on Oct. 7.

— Brent Zwerneman

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.2	26
Rushing	149.9	82
Passing	305.5	12
Total	455.4	30
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.1	T-75
Rushing	216.0	109
Passing	234.8	80
Total	450.8	102
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.54	T-105

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.8	T-71
Rushing	169.1	66
Passing	255.6	39
Total	424.7	50
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.0	T-28
Rushing	213.7	107
Passing	166.3	4
Total	380.0	51
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 6	- 0.46	T-102

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.8	34
Rushing	211.8	34
Passing	255.2	46
Total	467.0	24
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.5	40
Rushing	191.8	80
Passing	250.0	91
Total	441.8	90
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.23	T-42

NOTEBOOK

Texas A&M achieved quite a milestone this spring: The Aggies, long a bridesmaid in the NFL Draft, finally had their time at the football altar.

Defensive end Myles Garrett became the first Aggie in the program's history to be the No. 1 selection; five others had gone No. 2 in the decades before him.

"There are a couple of guys who could have got it themselves," the new Cleveland Brown said. "I'm blessed to be No. 1. I'm proud and I know they're proud of me."

Running backs John Kimbrough (1941) and John David Crow (1958), linebackers Quentin Coryatt (1992) and Von Miller (2011), and offensive lineman Luke Joeckel (2013) have been No. 2 overall selections from A&M in the draft since it started in 1936.

Punter **Shane Tripucka has a familiar last name to Notre Dame basketball and Detroit Pistons and Denver Broncos fans.

His uncle, **Kelly Tripucka**, starred for the Fighting Irish in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and he later averaged 27 points per game for the Pistons in his second season in the NBA.

"He could shoot," Shane said.

Shane's grandfather, the late Frank Tripucka, was the Broncos' first quarterback and had his No. 18 retired (although Peyton Manning later wore it with the family's permission). Shane's father, Chris, played football at Boston College at the same time as Doug Flutie. Meanwhile Kelly's son, Travis, has earned some time in the NFL as a long snapper.

"They're all of these big athletes who play all these sports, and I turned out to be a punter," Shane said with a chuckle. "It works for me — I'll take that route."

Linebacker **Justin Dunning, who began his A&M career as a safety, missed last season with a torn right ACL. He played as a true freshman in 2015, so last season served as a redshirt.

The injury was his third torn ACL, with the first two on his left knee. Coach **Kevin Sumlin** told Dunning he could retire and go on a medical scholarship. Dunning insisted that he wanted to play, albeit requesting a position change. That worked. He has a good chance of earning significant playing time at linebacker.

AGGIES SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
8 Connor Blumrick	QB	6-5	205	Fr.	Pearland
10 Jake Hubenak	QB	6-3	215	Sr.	Georgetown
16 Hank Hughes	QB	6-2	200	Fr.	Richardson
11 Kellen Mond	QB	6-2	200	Fr.	San Antonio
17 Nick Starkel	QB	6-3	205	Fr.	Argyle
19 Colton Taylor	QB	6-3	210	Fr.	Houston
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
32 Rakeem Boyd	RB	5-11	205	Fr.	Houston
25 Kendall Bussey	RB	5-9	200	So.	New Orleans, LA
27 John Clark	RB	5-8	200	Fr.	Northbrook, IL
22 Kwame Etwi	RB	5-9	200	Jr.	Conroe
7 Keith Ford	RB	5-11	215	Sr.	Cypress
28 AJ Sanders	RB	5-10	195	Fr.	The Woodlands
5 Trayveon Williams	RB	5-9	200	So.	Houston
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
2 Jhamon Ausbon	WR	6-2	220	Fr.	Houston
42 Ke'undre Azakytu	WR	6-0	180	Fr.	Dallas
35 Justice Bean	WR	5-11	180	Fr.	Frankston
80 Clyde Chriss	WR	6-0	170	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
1 Quartney Davis	WR	6-2	200	Fr.	Houston
15 Aaron Hansford	WR	6-3	230	So.	Washington, DC
13 Jamal Jeffery	WR	5-9	180	Sr.	Lufkin
9 Hezekiah Jones	WR	5-11	190	Fr.	Stafford
88 Matthew Kirchner	WR	6-2	200	So.	Plano
3 Christian Kirk	WR	5-11	200	Jr.	Scottsdale, AZ
33 Kirk Merritt	WR	5-11	210	So.	Destrehan, LA
6 Roshauud Paul	WR	6-0	180	Fr.	Bremond
4 Damion Ratley	WR	6-3	195	Sr.	Yoakum
30 Moses Reynolds	WR	6-2	190	Fr.	San Antonio
84 Kendrick Rogers	WR	6-3	210	Fr.	Frankston
83 Kyle Whitley	WR	6-2	220	Jr.	Troy
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
89 Kalvin Cline	TE	6-5	245	Sr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
24 Jake Graham	TE	6-0	228	Fr.	Waco
85 Grant Gustafson	TE	6-4	235	So.	Fort Worth
81 Jalyn Judkins	TE	6-4	230	Sr.	Angleton
41 Luke Laufenberg	TE	6-4	225	Fr.	Argyle
31 Gannon Rawlins	TE	6-3	215	Fr.	Galveston
86 Tanner Schorp	TE	6-3	245	Sr.	San Antonio
87 Greer Shetler	TE	6-4	215	So.	San Antonio
Offensive Lineman	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
55 Austin Anderson	OL	6-4	297	So.	Mineola
51 Riley Anderson	OL	6-5	294	So.	Mineola
63 Cagan Baldree	OL	6-4	283	Fr.	Carthage
67 Drew Beakey	OL	6-3	295	So.	Houston
66 Robert Congel	OL	6-3	310	Fr.	Greenwood Village, CO
50 Tank Davis	OL	6-4	290	Jr.	Garland
74 Kellen Diesch	OL	6-5	307	Fr.	Trophy Club
68 Justin Dworaczyk	OL	6-6	280	So.	Houston
73 Jared Hocker	OL	6-5	318	Fr.	North Richland Hills
70 Connor Lanfear	OL	6-6	310	Jr.	Buda
75 Koda Martin	OL	6-6	310	Jr.	Manvel
77 Ryan McCollum	OL	6-5	295	Fr.	Spring
64 Erik McCoy	OL	6-4	309	So.	Lufkin
76 Colton Prater	OL	6-4	300	So.	Bossier City, LA
78 Keaton Sutherland	OL	6-5	305	Jr.	Flower Mound
69 Brayden Talbert	OL	6-4	280	So.	Montgomery
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
86 David Darley	DE	6-4	240	Sr.	Westlake Village, CA
96 Jesse Brown	DL	6-0	285	Jr.	Katy
13 Reggie Chevis	DL	6-2	295	Sr.	Houston
9 Qualen Cunningham	DL	6-3	240	Sr.	Chandler, AZ
46 Landis Durham	DL	6-3	255	Jr.	Plano
60 Landry Estes	DL	6-2	280	Jr.	Trophy Club
91 K.J. Grimes	DL	6-3	230	Fr.	College Station
92 Zaycoven Henderson	DL	6-2	305	Sr.	Longview
37 Mitchell Howard	DL	6-1	233	So.	Cypress
40 Jarrett Johnson	DL	6-3	260	Sr.	Katy
88 Kingsley Keke	DL	6-4	300	Jr.	Richmond
5 Daylon Mack	DL	6-1	320	Jr.	Gladewater
52 Justin Madubuike	DL	6-3	292	Fr.	McKinney
90 TD Moton	DL	6-3	305	Fr.	Shreveport, LA
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
42 Otaro Alaka	LB	6-3	240	Jr.	Houston
47 Jett Crider	LB	6-0	230	Jr.	Bellville
25 Tyrel Dodson	LB	6-2	242	So.	Franklin, TN
8 Justin Dunning	LB	6-4	235	So.	Whitehouse
35 Riley Garner	LB	6-3	220	Jr.	College Station
45 Cullen Gillaspia	LB	6-2	234	Jr.	Katy
19 Anthony Hines III	LB	6-3	220	Fr.	Plano
50 Mac Labhart	LB	6-0	230	Jr.	Dallas
56 Keeath Magee II	LB	6-0	215	Fr.	Houston
32 Santino Marchiol	LB	6-1	224	Fr.	Centennial, CO
53 Trey McGahan	LB	6-1	200	Jr.	Kennedale
7 Richard Moore	LB	6-1	218	Jr.	Cedar Hill
49 Dirk Sanford	LB	6-1	210	So.	The Woodlands
16 Dwaine Thomas	LB	6-2	225	Jr.	Boutte, LA
58 Braden White	LB	5-11	220	Fr.	Florence, AL
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
26 Deshawn Capers-Smith	DB	6-0	192	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
14 Keldrick Carper	DB	6-2	190	Fr.	Plain Dealing, LA
22 Clifford Chattman	DB	6-5	190	So.	New Orleans, LA
26 Victor Davis	DB	6-1	190	Sr.	Rosenberg
27 Roney Elam	DB	6-2	185	So.	Newton
4 Noel Ellis	DB	5-10	185	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
28 Travon Fuller	DB	6-1	170	Fr.	Athens
1 Nick Harvey	DB	5-10	185	Sr.	Lancaster
20 Ikenna Okeke	DB	6-3	219	Fr.	Smyrna, TN
21 Charles Oliver	DB	6-2	200	So.	Fairfield
11 Larry Pryor	DB	6-0	205	So.	Sulphur Springs
18 Kemah Siverand	DB	6-1	200	So.	Cypress
23 Armani Watts	DB	5-11	205	Sr.	Forney
24 Priest Willis	DB	6-2	200	Sr.	Tempe, AZ
6 Donovan Wilson	DB	6-1	200	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
45 Austin Frey	DS	6-1	225	Jr.	Tomball
36 Daniel LaCamera	PK/P	6-4	225	Jr.	Tarpon Springs, FL
34 Braden Mann	P/KO	5-11	200	So.	Houston
38 Drew Riethman	PLK	6-0	190	Fr.	Fort Worth
46 Shane Tripucka	P	6-3	220	Sr.	Allen

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

On the offense: "They've always had receivers. The difference last year is they didn't have the offensive line they've had in the past. They'll be better in the offensive line, but they don't have the quarterback question answered. Who takes over for Trevor Knight? They've done a good job recruiting high-profile quarterbacks, but they keep transferring. Highly recruited quarterbacks don't stay if they ain't playing. When you're losing good quarterbacks, you've got to evaluate how you're handling those guys, even though quarterbacks are prima donnas."

On the defense: "Texas A&M has had enough time to recruit to the defensive style they want to play. They have the longest tenured defensive coordinator and the most successful defensive coordinator in the league (John Chavis). You can't help but think they'll be better on defense."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
T. Knight	11	123.2	193	362	7	53.3	2432	19	92	221.1
J. Hubenak	7	145.2	61	104	2	58.6	884	6	69	126.3

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Reynolds	13	61	1039	17.0	12	92	79.9
C. Kirk	13	83	928	11.2	9	69	71.4
R. Seals-Jones	11	26	333	12.8	1	47	30.3

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
T. Williams	13	156	1083	26	1057	6.8	8	89	81.3
T. Knight	11	102	743	129	614	6.0	10	62	55.8
K. Ford	13	126	701	32	669	5.3	6	28	51.5

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: S. Washington 104, J. Evans 87, O. Alaka 74
Tackles for loss: M. Garrett 15, D. Hall 13, C. George 11.5
Sacks: M. Garrett 8.5, D. Hall 4.5, J. Johnson 4.5, K. Keke 4
Interceptions: J. Evans 4, A. Watts 2, six tied with 1

247SPORTS AGGIES RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Anthony Hines, LB
The top-75 recruit looks to be a starter his first year on campus. At 6-3, 220 pounds, Hines is already physically developed enough to handle the rigors of the SEC. Look for the talented linebacker to anchor the Aggies' defense for years to come.

Jhamon Ausbon, WR
The 6-2, 220-pound target is already in the mix for a starting job this fall. Ausbon is not only a physically strong receiver, but he's also fluid and quick enough to shake free from defenders.

Kellen Mond, QB
The 6-2, 200-pound dual-threat quarterback enrolled in the spring with the idea of competing for the starting job in year one. While Mond still needs to develop as a passer a bit more, there may not be a better running quarterback in the 2017 class.

SLEEPER

Camron Horry, TE
Standing 6-5, 260 pounds, Horry is physically ready for the demands of the position. The three-star recruit also has a pretty wide open depth chart to play right away in College Station. Look for Horry to earn snaps and be a key part of the offense his first year on campus.

2018 NEEDS

Texas A&M is already low on numbers at the defensive end position and will lose two of those players after this season due to graduation. The Aggies are looking to add up to three edge rushers to their defense in the 2018 recruiting class.

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star
0	9	18	0

Committments	27
Average Stars	3.33
Total Stars	90
National Rank: 12	SEC: 6

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Jhamon Ausbon	WR	6-2	220	✪✪✪✪	Houston	IMG Academy (FL)
247Sports.com rated No. 28 wide receiver and No. 75 player nationally and No. 14 player in Florida… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… As a senior, had 18 receptions for 399 yards and five touchdowns.						
Connor Blumrick	QB	6-5	200	✪✪✪	Pearland	Pearland
Ranked No. 35 pro-style quarterback nationally and No. 123 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… As a junior, had almost 1,500 yards passing.						
Camron Buckley	WR	6-2	185	✪✪✪	Cedar Hill	Cedar Hill
247Sports.com rated No. 55 wide receiver nationally and No. 53 player in Texas… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… As a senior, had 26 receptions for 380 yards and three touchdowns						
Keldrick Carper	ATH	6-2	175	✪✪✪	Plain Dealing, LA	Plain Dealing
Ranked No. 27 safety nationally and No. 13 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Had 52 receptions for 823 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior… Had 391 yards rushing and six touchdowns… Had 61 tackles and four interceptions… Returned two punts for touchdowns.						
Micheal Clemons	DE	6-5	240	✪✪✪	Garland	Cisco Junior College
247Sports.com rated No. 3 junior college defensive end and No. 22 player nationally and No. 5 junior college player in Texas… Averaged five tackles per game as a freshman… Had 8.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 quarterback sacks.						
Carson Green	OL	6-6	272	✪✪✪	Southlake	Southlake Carroll
Ranked No. 107 offensive tackle nationally and No. 154 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… As a senior, graded 98 percent, had 81 knockdown blocks and did not allow a quarterback sack.						
Anthony Hines, III	LB	6-3	220	✪✪✪✪	Plano	Plano East
Parade All-American… 247Sports.com rated No. 2 inside linebacker and No. 63 player nationally and No. 8 player in Texas… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… All-State… Had 640 career tackles including 96 tackles for loss.						
Jared Hocker	OL	6-6	301	✪✪✪	North Richland Hills	Birdville
Ranked No. 125 offensive tackle nationally and No. 181 player in Texas by 247Sports.com.						
Camron Horry	TE	6-5	260	✪✪✪	Katy	Taylor
247Sports.com rated No. 18 tight end nationally and No. 68 player in Texas… As a senior, had 10 receptions for 136 yards and one touchdown.						
Devodrick Johnson	LB	6-2	211	✪✪✪	Dallas	Kimball
Ranked No. 19 outside linebacker nationally and No. 49 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Had 472 yards rushing, 446 yards receiving, and 268 yards passing as a senior.						
Tyree Johnson	DE	6-4	247	✪✪✪	Washington, DC	St. John's College High School
247Sports.com rated No. 32 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 4 player in DC… As a senior, had 66 tackles, including 32 tackles for loss, 11 quarterback sacks and two fumbles caused.						
Hezekiah Jones	WR	5-11	168	✪✪✪✪	Stafford	Stafford
Ranked No. 29 wide receiver and No. 180 player nationally and No. 31 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… Had 36 receptions for 660 yards and 14 touchdowns as a senior.						
Myles Jones	CB	6-4	175	✪✪✪✪	Magnolia	Magnolia West
247Sports.com rated No. 25 safety nationally and No. 48 player in Texas… As a senior, had 29 tackles, three interceptions, and nine passes broken up… Blocked two field goal attempts and two punts.						

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Jacob Kibodi	RB	6-2	198	✪✪✪	Baton Rouge, LA	Christian Life Academy
Ranked No. 48 running back nationally and No. 35 player in Louisiana by 247Sports.com… Had 1,208 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns as a senior.						
Santino Marchiol	LB	6-3	224	✪✪✪✪	Centennial, CO	IMG Academy (FL)
247Sports.com rated No. 17 inside linebacker nationally and No. 42 player in Florida… As a senior, had 54 tackles, including four tackles for loss, and one quarterback sack.						
Keynel McZeal	TE	6-2	220	✪✪✪	Port Neches	Port Neches-Groves
Ranked No. 31 tight end nationally and No. 100 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Had 34 receptions for 537 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior.						
Kellen Mond	QB	6-2	200	✪✪✪✪	San Antonio	IMG Academy (FL)
247Sports.com rated No. 3 dual-threat quarterback and No. 108 player nationally and No. 20 player in Florida… Played in Under Armour All-American Game… As a senior, had 1,936 yards passing and 20 touchdowns… Had 775 yards rushing and 18 touchdowns.						
Dan Moore, Jr.	OL	6-5	315	✪✪✪	Beaumont	West Brook
Ranked No. 39 offensive guard nationally and No. 104 player in Texas by 247Sports.com.						
Devin Morris	CB	6-1	180	✪✪✪	Caldwell	Caldwell
247Sports.com rated No. 50 cornerback nationally and No. 69 player in Texas… Had 40 tackles and three interceptions as a senior.						
Roshauud Paul	WR	6-0	170	✪✪✪	Bremond	Bremond
Ranked No. 64 wide receiver nationally and No. 60 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Helped team the three consecutive state titles and 47-0 record… As a senior, had 2,256 yards passing and 24 touchdowns.						
Jayden Peevy	DT	6-6	279	✪✪✪✪	Bellaire	Bellaire
247Sports.com rated No. 15 defensive tackle nationally and No. 40 player in Texas… Played in U.S. Army All-American Game… Had 77 tackles, 10 quarterback sacks and 14 quarterback hurries as a senior.						
Grayson Reed	OL	6-5	305	✪✪✪✪	Cypress	Cypress Creek
Ranked No. 24 offensive tackle nationally and No. 41 player in Texas by 247Sports.com.						
Debione Renfro	CB	6-2	183	✪✪✪	Pearland	Pearland
247Sports.com rated No. 110 cornerback nationally and No. 207 player in Texas… As a senior, had 48 tackles and 10 passes broken up… Returned two punts for touchdowns.						
Ondario Robinson	DE	6-3	236	✪✪✪	Hutto	Hutto
Ranked No. 50 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 139 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Had 68 tackles, including 18 tackles for loss, 12 quarterback sacks, blocked two punts and one field goal attempt as a senior.						
Joshua Rogers	DT	6-5	277	✪✪✪	Houston	Houston Christian
247Sports.com rated No. 64 defensive tackle nationally and No. 125 player in Texas… As a senior, had 35 tackles (24 solo), including 13 tackles for loss, and three quarterback sacks.						
Derrick Tucker	S	6-1	189	✪✪✪✪	Manvel	Manvel
Ranked No. 18 safety nationally and No. 26 player in Texas by 247Sports.com… Had 59 tackles and six interceptions as a senior.						
Adrian Wolford	OL	6-4	323	✪✪✪	Meeker, OK	Meeker
247Sports.com rated No. 26 offensive guard nationally and No. 10 player in Oklahoma.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Aggies need Watts to lead the way on defense

Armani Watts has a knack for making goal-line plays ... and one of the coolest names in college football. He never bothered asking his mother where his first name originated.

"I just assumed it was from Giorgio Armani," Watts said of the celebrated clothing designer. "And she just went with it."

A&M coach Kevin Sumlin has gone with Armani, too, since Watts' arrival from North Forney High east of Dallas three years ago. The freewheeling free safety is the unquestioned leader of the defense entering his senior season, eager to improve on A&M's 8-5 finishes in each of his first three seasons.

"You can say it's going to be different this year," Watts said. "But it's going to be about how we put in our work ... we have to love what we do."

It's been apparent Watts loves what he does from the time of his arrival to Aggieland in the summer of 2014. He played in every game as a true freshman, leading the Aggies with three interceptions. In 2015, he became the first Aggie to reach 100 tackles since 2010 with 126, and the first A&M defensive back to tally at least 100 tackles since 2003.

Watts' junior season a year ago started especially promising, as he stripped the ball and recovered the fumble in a goal-line stand against Arkansas, and then collected three tackles in another goal-line stop in the same game. Two weeks later, Watts' interception in overtime near the goal line lifted A&M to a victory over Tennessee.

Ten games into a solid season, however, he tore his hamstring in a narrow home loss to Mississippi, ending his season. Watts didn't miss a down of spring drills, however.

That injury also played a big part in him not declaring for the NFL Draft following his junior season — a silver lining for the Aggies, who desperately need playmaking safeties.

"Armani has blossomed into one of the better players in our league," Sumlin said.

As for any lingering effects from his injury?

FS
Armani Watts
Photo by Michael Wade

"I feel perfect," Watts said. "That was really my first time to be injured, and it was frustrating to not be able to compete."

Watts also drilled this spring for the first time under new secondary coach Ron Cooper after Terry Joseph left for a similar position at North Carolina.

"We're more aggressive and playing more man-to-man right now," Watts said. "I love it."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/texas-am

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

WR CHRISTIAN KIRK

The only player in Texas A&M history with two seasons of at least 80 catches. ... Was chosen first-team All-SEC at three different positions by the league's coaches: all-purpose, wide receiver and return specialist. ... Kirk has been one of the most feared players in the SEC in the open field. ... He led the nation with three punt returns for touchdowns last season. ... In the mold of ex-Aggies DE Myles Garrett, the junior is a model student away from the field.

EMERGING STAR

QB NICK STARKEL

The redshirt freshman wasn't a flashy signee in 2016, but Kevin Sumlin saw a project who could develop into a pro-style passer, and he was right. ... The 6-3 Starkel has filled out a bit from arriving in Aggieland at 175 pounds, and he owns the strongest arm on the team. ... He played at Texas power Southlake Carroll High as a freshman before spending his final three seasons at Liberty Christian in Argyle, Texas.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR JHAMON AUSBON

The true freshman graduated early from IMG Academy and took part in spring drills, and played like a veteran when he should have still been in high school. ... At 6-2, 220, he also looks the part of a receiver who's already been a part of the college grind. .... He wasn't afraid to mix it up with defensive backs during spring scrimmages, and won more battles than he lost. ... The Aggies lost a lot of receivers from last season, but Ausbon appears ready to roll now.

ARKANSAS STATE | RED WOLVES

Sun Belt rank: 3 Record: 8-5 Sun Belt record: 7-1 (T-1st) Stadium: Centennial Bank Stadium (30,406)

RED WOLVES at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Jonesboro, Ark.
COACH: Blake Anderson — At Arkansas State and overall: 24-15, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Buster Faulkner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Cauthen

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2016, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 5 offense, 4 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Justice Hansen, RB Warren Wand, WR Dijon Paschal, TE Blake Mack, DE Ja'Von Rolland-Jones, LB Kyle Wilson, NB Justin Clifton

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Red Wolves have talent at the skill positions with returning starters at quarterback, running back, tight end and at least one wide receiver spot. Rolland-Jones was Player of the Year in the Sun Belt. Could be good news: Head coach Blake Anderson is handling the quarterbacks and will call offensive plays this season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The entire offensive line must be replaced. Depth at wide receiver could be an issue. Only two starters in the front defensive six return. Newcomers will have to replace a pair of all-conference performers at safety.

JA'VON ROLLAND-JONES
Photo by Del Mecum Cal Sport Media via AP Images

OFFENSE

Justice Hansen took over at quarterback in the fourth game after Arkansas State started last season with three consecutive losses. After losing to Central Arkansas in his first start, the former Oklahoma signee guided the Red Wolves to eight wins in their last nine games.

That included a 31-13 win over UCF in the Cure Bowl in which he passed for three touchdowns. Hansen, who spent a redshirt year with the Sooners before transferring to Butler (Kansas) Community College and then ASU, ended up completing 57.9 percent of his passes for 209.2 yards per game, with 19 touchdowns and eight interceptions.

Hansen will have tight end Blake Mack (34 receptions, 652 yards) and wide receiver Dijon Paschal (22-308) to throw to this fall, and Arkansas transfer Kendrick Edwards is eligible after sitting out last season.

But ASU loses its top receiver, Kendall Sanders (38-553), and the status of Cameron Echols-Luper (26-407) is in doubt. Echols-Luper was suspended in the spring after being arrested and charged with misdemeanor drug possession (marijuana).

Warren Wand is an all-conference candidate at running back, but he will be running behind an entirely new line after rushing for 879 yards last year.

DEFENSE

Only four starters return on defense, but one of them is Sun Belt Player of the Year Ja'von Rolland-Jones.

Over a third of the senior end's 57 tackles were for a loss (20.5), which included a league-best 13.5 sacks. He also was credited with seven quarterback hurries and forced and recovered a fumble.

Rolland-Jones' counterpart at the other end, Chris Odom, has exhausted his eligibility, however. He had 12.5 sacks last year. Linebacker Xavier Woodson-Luster, last year's leading tackler with 95 stops, also is one of seven lost starters.

Nickel-back Justin Clifton (87 tackles) and linebacker Kyle Wilson (79, including 15.5 for loss) are among the key returnees. Wilson and tackle Dee Liner, who had four starts, both had strong showings in the spring.

> "These guys will work, and they will compete, and they love ball, and they love each other. This is a close-knit group."
> — Coach Blake Anderson

The key issue in the secondary is replacing two All-Sun Belt safeties after losing Money Hunter (first team) and Cody Brown (second team). Junior college transfers Darreon Jackson and Michael Johnson are ticketed to fill those spots going into fall camp.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Damon Foncham averaged 39.3 yards on 77 punts as a redshirt freshman last year. Sawyer Williams will add field-goal attempts and PATs to his duties after handling kickoffs during his redshirt freshman season. Running back Daryl Rollins-Davis averaged 25.5 yards on kick returns. Cornerback Blaise Taylor has returned a punt for a touchdown in each of the past three seasons.

OVERVIEW

As usual, Arkansas State has an ambitious early schedule, opening at Nebraska and then getting Miami at home the next week. But the Red Wolves showed their resiliency in recovering from an 0-4 start last year, and a repeat performance could be in the works again. The key will be rebuilding the offensive line.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Kendrick Edwards: Edwards sat out the 2016 season after transferring from Arkansas, where he was released in midseason of 2015 after being suspended briefly in the spring. Edwards had eight receptions for 121 yards and a touchdown in his time with the Razorbacks. At 6-5, 212, he is a huge target.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	15	**Justice Hansen***	6-4	207	Jr.
RB	6	**Warren Wand***	5-5	179	Jr.
WR	84	**Dijon Paschal***	6-1	209	Sr.
WR	14	**Chris Murray***	5-9	181	Sr.
AB	13	Christian Booker	5-11	174	Sr.
TE	16	**Blake Mack***	6-3	245	Sr.
LT	70	Lanard Bonner	6-5	330	Jr.
LG	N/A	Marvis Brown	6-3	337	Jr.
C	52	Chase Johnson	6-3	286	Jr.
RG	67	Troy Elliot	6-5	297	So.
RT	N/A	Jaypee Philbert	6-5	314	Sr.

DEFENSE

DE	11	**Ja'Von Rolland-Jones***	6-2	244	Sr.
NT	91	Donovan Ransom	6-1	304	Jr.
DT	25	Dee Liner	6-3	325	Sr.
DE	54	Caleb Caston	6-2	240	Sr.
LB	26	Trent Ellis	6-2	212	So.
LB	15	**Kyle Wilson***	6-0	228	Sr.
NB	10	**Justin Clifton***	6-0	206	Jr.
CB	1	**Blaise Taylor***	5-9	165	Sr.
CB	2	Nehemiah Wagner	6-0	167	Sr.
SS	N/A	Darreon Jackson	6-0	200	So.
FS	N/A	Michael Johnson	6-1	180	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	38	Sawyer Williams	5-11	205	So.
P	99	**Damon Foncham***	5-8	196	So.

***Returning starters in Bold**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Nebraska
Sept. 9	MIAMI
Sept. 16	ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF
Sept. 23	at SMU
Oct. 4	at Georgia Southern
Oct. 14	COASTAL CAROLINA
Oct. 19	LOUISIANA
Oct. 28	at New Mexico State
Nov. 11	at South Alabama
Nov. 18	TEXAS STATE
Nov. 25	at ULM
Dec. 2	TROY

2016 RESULTS

L	TOLEDO	10-31
L	at Auburn	14-51
L	at Utah State	20-34
L	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	23-28
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	27-26
W	SOUTH ALABAMA	17-7
W	ULM	51-10
W	at Georgia State	31-16
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	41-22
W	at Troy	35-3
L	at Louisiana	19-24
W	at Texas State	36-14
	Cure Bowl	
W	vs. UCF	31-13

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.3	74
Rushing	137.2	106
Passing	242.2	57
Total	379.4	93

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.5	19
Rushing	143.4	34
Passing	219.5	51
Total	362.8	29

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 5	+ 0.38	T-34

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

For more coverage of the Commodores, visit vanderbilt.247Sports.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Ludwig **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Derek Mason **STADIUM:** Vanderbilt Stadium: 39,790

MASON NARROWING GAP DURING FOURTH YEAR AT VU

Comparisons between coach Derek Mason and his predecessor, James Franklin, are frequent.

The scorecard after three years — Franklin won 24 games, Mason 13 — still leaves a gap.

The coaches are a case study in opposites. Franklin, the polished politician, was obsessed with perceptions and recruiting rankings. Mason has made headlines for some less-than-refined moments in press conferences, and all four of his recruiting classes have ranked last in the Southeastern Conference.

But the gap has begun to narrow.

While Franklin's squads won nine games and twice finished in the AP Top 25, one can easily argue that Mason amassed more quality wins last season alone than Franklin did in his three. Vanderbilt finished 2016 with impressive victories over favored Ole Miss and Tennessee, the latter being a 45-34 whipping of the Vols that featured an unthinkable 608 yards of total offense, a higher single-game total than any Franklin team had.

VU also picked up road wins at Georgia and Western Kentucky (the Hilltoppers led the nation in offense and won Conference USA) and took Auburn, Florida and Kentucky to the final minutes before losing.

The Commodores won three games last year that, based on recruiting rankings, they shouldn't have been in. And that's at least in part because Mason built a cohesive roster of players who fit his system on the field and don't cause chemistry problems.

Vanderbilt has had no off-field issues since Mason's arrival, while Franklin's final year was marred by the dismissal of five players, related to a campus rape.

"I've always said, if I can minimize the outside stress, I can maximize the on-field performance," Mason said.

But VU lacked consistency. An opening-night home loss to a green South Carolina team, a blowout loss at Georgia Tech, a defeat at last-place Missouri and a 41-17 trouncing by NC State in the Independence Bowl were low points.

This year, the Commodores return 18 starters, second only in the SEC to Georgia and Kentucky's 19, and 43 lettermen. Players who amassed 91.9 percent of the total offense return, as do 18 of 2016's top 26 top tacklers.

In an Eastern Division that should be as competitive as ever from top to bottom in 2017, the Commodores could be a factor.

OFFENSE

After finishing minus-24 in turnovers in Mason's first two years combined, the Commodores were plus-4 in 2016.

But through seven games of 2016, Vanderbilt averaged just 281 yards of total offense and 18.1 points per game. In its last five regular-season games, those numbers improved to 443 and 26.3, as quarterback Kyle Shurmur was able to stretch defenses vertically late in the year, burning Tennessee and Ole Miss for 416 and 273 passing yards.

"What you started to see was better play at the quarterback position, better grasp of the offense, not turning the ball over. ... What you saw was progress, a football team that on the back end of the season realized their mistakes and didn't make the same mistakes as we finished out the season," Mason said.

Still, Shurmur's inconsistency reared its head in the bowl game, although a foot injury suffered on the first series didn't help. A lot hinges on Shurmur's ability to take the next step in his third year as the starter.

His receiving corps, while certainly not elite, is one of the best at VU in decades.

Trent Sherfield and Caleb Scott emerged as big-play guys late in 2016. Sherfield was perhaps VU's most productive receiver in the spring, while Scott sat out nursing an injury. Explosive sophomore Kalija Lipscomb led the team in catches and yards midway through last season before being hampered by injuries.

Steady senior C.J. Duncan responded well after missing 2015 with an injury, leading the team in catches (44) and yards (494).

At tight end, VU has an excellent blocker in Nathan Marcus, and a sophomore with eventual All-SEC potential in Jared Pinkney, who needs to improve his catching consistency.

Mason will build this offense around the

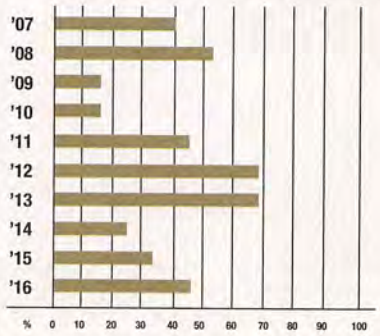
SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'16 Record
Sept. 2	at Middle Tennessee	8-5
Sept. 9	ALABAMA A&M	4-7
Sept. 16	KANSAS STATE	9-4
Sept. 23	ALABAMA	14-1
Sept. 30	at Florida	9-4
Oct. 7	GEORGIA	8-5
Oct. 14	at Ole Miss	5-7
Oct. 28	at South Carolina	6-7
Nov. 4	WESTERN KENTUCKY	11-3
Nov. 11	KENTUCKY	7-6
Nov. 18	MISSOURI	4-8
Nov. 25	at Tennessee	9-4

RESULTS

	6-7, 3-5	
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	10-13
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	47-24
L	at Georgia Tech	7-38
W	at Western Kentucky (OT)	31-30
L	FLORIDA	6-13
L	at Kentucky	13-20
W	at Georgia	17-16
W	TENNESSEE STATE	35-17
L	at Auburn	16-23
L	at Missouri	17-26
W	OLE MISS	38-17
W	TENNESSEE	45-34
	Independence Bowl	
L	NC State	17-41

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
Nashville, Tenn.

2016:
6-7 overall, 3-5 SEC (T-5th, East)

COACH:
Derek Mason — At Vanderbilt and overall: 13-24, 3 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
18; 9 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Kyle Shurmur, RB Ralph Webb, WR Trent Sherfield, DT Nifae Lealao, CB Joejuan Williams, S Ryan White

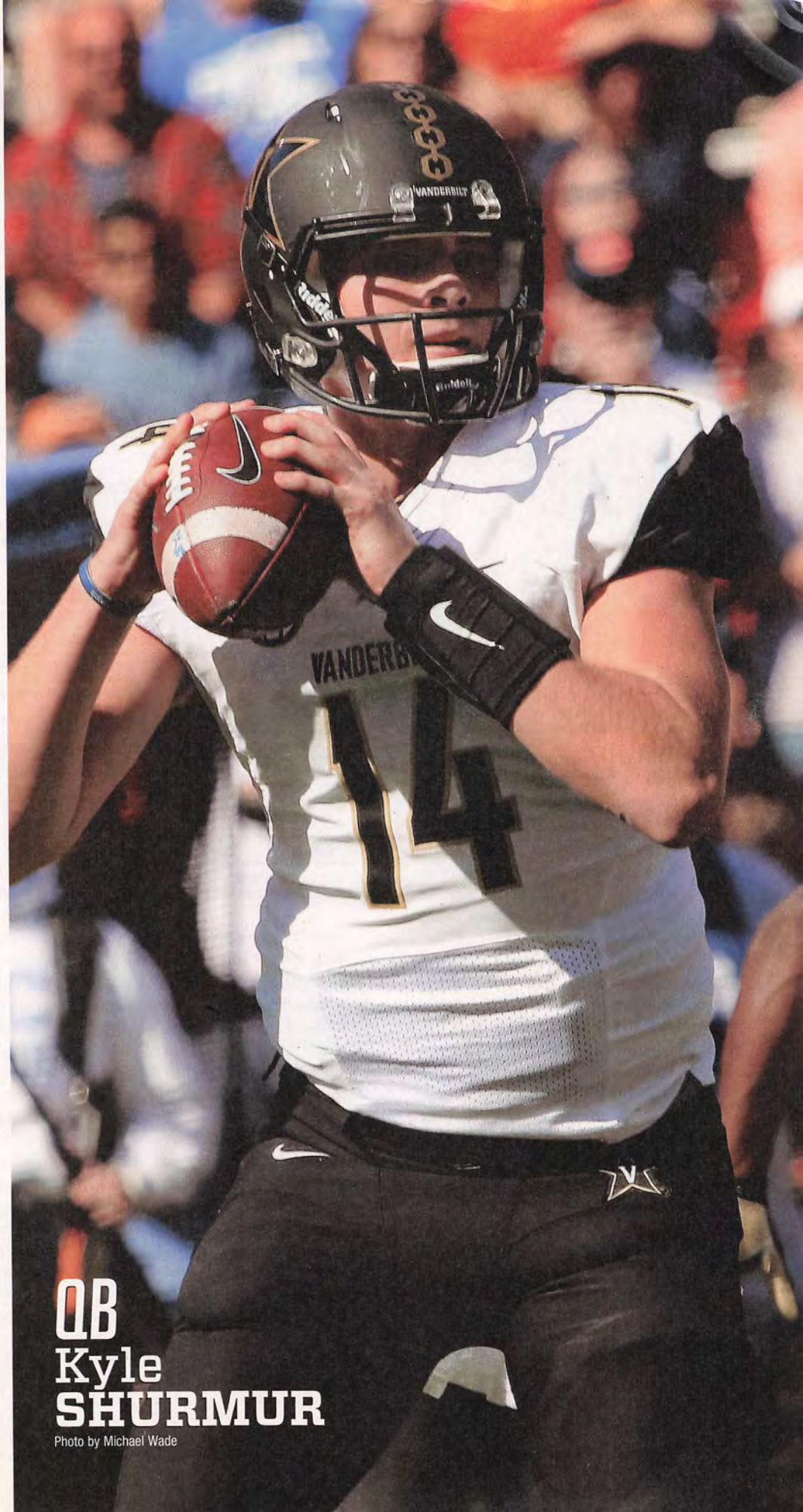
PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
VU has an experienced roster that's unified and disciplined, one that gained confidence from beating good teams in 2016. The Commodores should run effectively, and they finally found a productive passing game at the end of '16. Mason's defenses have succeeded with a bend-but-don't-break approach, and the depth and talent in the secondary is his best.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The offense hasn't shown the ability to move the ball consistently across a full season and the offensive tackle spots are unsettled. No quarterback behind Shurmur has taken a collegiate snap. The defensive line is thin, a pass rush is lacking, special teams still need improving, and the schedule is brutal.

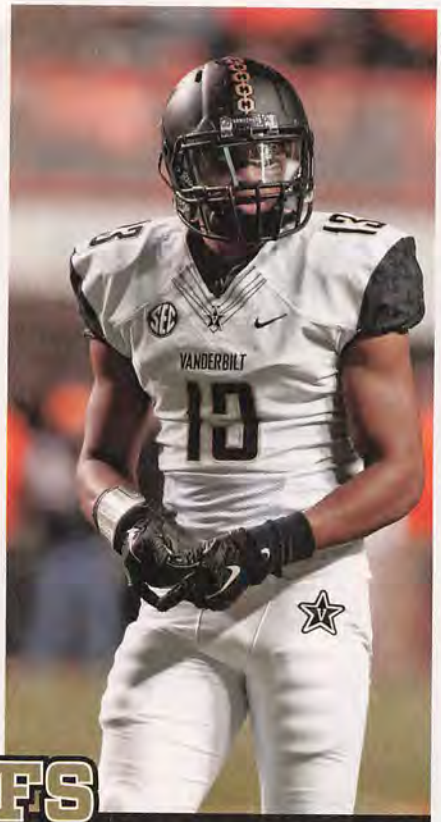
KEY LOSSES:
LT Will Holden, C Barrett Gouger, DL Adam Butler, ILB Zach Cunningham, OLB Landon Stokes, CB Torren McGaster

OVERVIEW:
The offense looks poised to break out, but the defense needs to create more pressure and turnovers while replacing consensus first-team All-American linebacker Zach Cunningham. Mason has a fighting shot at his first winning season, if the Commodores can keep Shurmur and their defensive line healthy and again do well in turnover margin after finishing plus-4 last season.

KEY NUMBER:
62.5 That's last season's winning percentage of the 11 FBS teams on Vanderbilt's 2017 schedule. Those teams combined to go 90-54, with 10 squads going to a bowl game and Alabama playing for the national title.



QB
Kyle SHURMUR
Photo by Michael Wade



FS

LaDarius Wiley

Photo by Charles Mitchell/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	**Kyle Shurmur***	Jr.	Should improve on last year's ratio of 9 TDs, 10 interceptions.	Deuce Wallace, Fr.
RB	**Ralph Webb***	Sr.	1,449 yards from scrimmage, 13 TDs in 2016.	Khari Blasingame, Jr.
FB	**Bailey McElwain***	So.	Good blocker who scored twice on six catches.	Dallas Rivers, Sr.
WR	**Trent Sherfield***	Sr.	Owns single-game receiving totals of 240, 184 yards.	Caleb Scott, Sr.
WR	**Kalija Lipscomb***	So.	71-yard punt return in bowl game showed his explosiveness.	C.J. Duncan, Sr.
TE	**Nathan Marcus***	Sr.	Quality blocker with 17 career starts.	Jared Pinkney, So.
LT	**Justin Skule***	Jr.	15 career starts at right tackle, where he probably fits better.	Devin Cochran, Fr.
LG	**Ean Pfeifer***	So.	Pleasant surprise who started nine games as a freshman.	Egidio DellaRipa, Jr.
C	Cole Hardin	Jr.	Was a possible starter in '16, but instead spent the season hurt.	Sean Auwae-McMoore, Fr.
RG	**Bruno Reagan***	Jr.	15 career starts; mauls opponents in run blocking.	Braden Kopp, Fr.
RT	Bailey Granier	Jr.	Surprise tackle starter in spring; could switch back to guard.	Jared Southers, So.
PK	**Tommy Openshaw***	Sr.	176 career points, which is 79 from school record.	Ryley Guay, So.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	**Jonathan Wynn***	Sr.	16 career starts; set a career high with 28 tackles in '16.	Cameron Tidd, Fr.
DT	**Nifae Lealao***	Sr.	Former top-150 recruit became a force late in 2016.	Jay Woods, Sr.
DE	Dare Odeyingbo	Jr.	Talented, but needs to prove he can stop the run.	Drew Birchmeier, Fr.
LB	Charles Wright	Jr.	Great spring; could he be a breakout pass-rusher?	Kenny Hebert, Fr.
LB	Emmanuel Smith	Sr.	Last chance for former 4-star safety recruit to make a splash.	Jordan Griffin, Jr.
LB	**Oren Burks***	Sr.	Converted safety has four career picks and 19 break-ups.	Jay Hockaday, So.
LB	Josh Smith	Jr.	Emmanuel's brother; darkhorse candidate to be a breakout star.	Caleb Peart, So.
CB	Joejuan Williams	So.	Came on strong late after missing HS senior season.	Bryce Lewis, Jr.
CB	**Tre Herndon***	Sr.	Improved in '16 and registered first two career picks.	**Taurean Ferguson, Sr.***
SS	**Ryan White***	Sr.	Started 12 games in '16, could be an All-SEC player in '17.	Zaire Jones, Fr.
FS	**LaDarius Wiley***	Sr.	Leading returning tackler (76 stops) and may do it again.	Arnold Tarpley, Sr.
P	**Sam Loy***	So.	Can punt the traditional way, but excels at rugby style.	Reid Nelson, Sr.

***Returning Starter in Bold**

power running game and second-team All-SEC running back Ralph Webb. Junior Khari Blasingame, in his first year after converting from linebacker, rushed for 10 scores last season — and he had a 53-yard touchdown in the team's Spring Showcase. Redshirt freshman Jamauri Wakefield is talented, and sophomore fullback Bailey McElwain is an excellent blocker.

Offensive line coach Cameron Norcross worked wonders in his first year, but the 'Dores lost second-team All-SEC left tackle Will Holden. In the spring, VU flipped Justin Skule, an excellent run blocker, to that side, but freshman Devin Cochran is better suited there if he develops.

VU breaks in a new center, with Cole Hardin and Sean Auwae-McMoore even at spring's end. If Skule moves to his old position, expect VU to frequently run right due to Bruno Reagan, another great run blocker, at right guard.

Vandy must improve on last year's total of 32 sacks allowed.

DEFENSE

For the first time in forever at Vanderbilt, there may be more questions on the defensive side of the ball.

First, VU must replace inside linebacker Zach Cunningham, a first-team All-American who made a slew of huge plays in 2016.

Secondly, the Commodores have had trouble creating pressure on the quarterback. Mason made that a goal last season, but the Commodores regressed from 26 sacks to 15.

Finally, VU has struggled to make interceptions, registering six in 2015 and only five last season.

Still, the Commodores have been one of the country's stingiest teams in the red zone two years running, helping VU give up just 21.0 points in '15 and 24.0 last season.

Vanderbilt will build around 312-pound senior lineman Nifae Lealao, who had a pair of sacks in the Spring Showcase.

"When he wants to, when he's fresh, when he's in the right frame of mind, he's as good as any nose tackle in the conference," Mason said. "But with that, we need the consistency that goes along with the maturity."

This could be Mason's best secondary, one he felt improved as 2016 progressed.

"I saw less explosive plays, better tackling and better communication on the back end," Mason said.

Sophomore Joejuan Williams, who could have signed anywhere, is a big, physical corner who got a lot of reps at season's end. Opposite him, Tre Herndon took a step forward and led the team with two interceptions. Safety Ryan White and LaDarius Wiley made VU tough to throw against over the middle in the season's second half, and the Commodores have quality, experienced depth with corner Taurean Ferguson and nickel Arnold Tarpley.

There's no Cunningham in the linebacker group, but Mason terms the situation "by committee," and has stockpiled quality players.

Brothers Josh and Emmanuel Smith, a pair of formerly touted recruits, start at outside and inside, respectively. Josh

TOP 5 NFL PROSPECTS

1. Ralph Webb RB 5-10 200 4.53 rSr.

Since redshirting in 2013, Webb has proven a true workhorse for the Commodores. Despite setting single-season (1,283 yards) and career rushing records (3,342) for Vanderbilt last year, Webb opted to return for the 2017 season.

He possesses a short, broad-shouldered frame, which has helped him hold up to the punishment to this point. Webb is quick to press the hole and take full advantage when it is there, zipping into the secondary.

His experience shows in his ability to anticipate cutback lanes, showing burst out of his plant leg to gain yardage in chunks, as well as the lateral agility and balance to shake would-be tacklers in tight quarters.

Despite his production and toughness, Webb does not possess an ideal frame to continue his bell-cow ways in the NFL. His first-step acceleration is intriguing, but he is more quick than fast with just one carry over 50 yards on 739 career rushing attempts.

At the end of spring practice, Webb rated No. 4 among senior running backs on NFLDraftScout.com's ratings.

2. Josh Smith	OLB	6-3	238	4.75	Jr.
3. Nifae Lealao	DT	6-5	317	5.17	Sr.
4. Emmanuel Smith	SS	6-2	222	4.65	Sr.
5. Nathan Marcus	TE	6-5	242	4.86	rSr.

— Rob Rang, NFLDraftScout.com

LB **Oren Burks**

Photo by Michael Wade

Smith's talent was evident early enough that the 'Dores planned for him to take over for Cunningham a year ago, while Emmanuel opened last season starting at safety.

Backup Jordan Griffin is a thick-bodied, active defender who reminds some of VU linebackers coach Chris Marve, a former All-SEC standout. Oren Burks, a converted safety who didn't work out as an edge-rusher as Mason planned last year, may be the team's most versatile defender; he broke up six passes at linebacker last season.

Also watch for Charles Wright outside; he had a great spring and could be a stand-up edge rusher.

The biggest questions may come along the line. Dare Odeyingbo and Jonathan Wynn have had moments at end, but neither stands out. Their backups, Cameron Tidd and Drew Birchmeier, did stand out at times in the spring, but both are freshmen.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jeff Genyk was hired to coordinate these units for 2016. VU was average across the board, but that was a leap from a horrific 2015.

Kicker Tommy Openshaw lost confidence and made just 12 of 19 field-goal attempts in 2015. The Commodores took away his punting duties last season, which helped his focus. Openshaw was 15 of 19 on field-goal tries, with a long of 52. He's hit all 71 career PATs.

Punter Sam Loy was effective in helping with field position, averaging 41.2 yards per kick on what were mostly low, directionally minded efforts.

VU was pedestrian in the return game in the past two seasons. Spring didn't provide clarity, but wide receiver Kalija Lipscomb and fellow sophomore Donaven Tennyson may be the team's two most explosive athletes, and each got work in the spring as return men.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

With the exception of Alabama, you can't count out Vanderbilt in any game. But excepting Alabama A&M, there are no sure wins, either.

Four of VU's divisional losses last season weren't settled until the final minute. A return trip to Tennessee, a series in which Vandy has won three of the last five, is always interesting.

The Commodores also traditionally match up well with permanent Western Division rival Ole Miss, having won six of the last 10.

The opener, 30 minutes down the road at Middle Tennessee, will be the Blue Raiders' Super Bowl; Middle won the first three matchups of the millennium, but fell to VU in each of the past two seasons.

Vandy didn't go easy with its other two non-conference games; Kansas State is tough, and Western Kentucky won at VU two seasons ago.

— Chris Lee

2014 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.2	T-116
Rushing	109.3	113
Passing	179.1	105
Total	288.4	122
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.3	104
Rushing	183.8	86
Passing	218.3	49
Total	402.1	68
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 16	- 1.3	121

2015 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	15.2	T-123
Rushing	154.7	T-87
Passing	171.8	111
Total	326.5	116
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.0	22
Rushing	143.2	33
Passing	207.3	41
Total	350.5	28
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.67	109

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.0	113
Rushing	164.5	77
Passing	191.2	100
Total	355.7	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.0	T-35
Rushing	163.5	57
Passing	244.6	83
Total	408.2	64
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	T-38

NOTEBOOK

Ex-coach **James Franklin's** final full class of recruits, the 2013 class that was ranked in the national Top 25, will leave Vanderbilt at the end of this season.

Franklin hit big on All-American linebacker **Zach Cunningham** (who left VU early for the NFL) and second-team All-SEC running back **Ralph Webb**. Projected 2017 starters include kicker **Tommy Openshaw**, linebacker **Oren Burks**, tight end **Nathan Marcus**, safety **Ryan White** and defensive end **Jonathan Wynn**.

Reserves **Jay Woods** (defensive tackle) and **Taurean Ferguson** (cornerback) will contribute heavily this season.

Two starters, linebacker Nigel Bowden and guard Delando Crooks, quit football due to health issues. Bowden led VU in tackles as a freshman.

But 13 of the 26 players, including Cunningham, left before completing their eligibility at VU. That includes linebacker Landon Stokes, who started 14 games in '16, and injury-plagued tight end DeAndre Woods, now at Old Dominion. Most of the rest contributed minimally, or not at all.

Quarterback Johnny McCrary, the most highly-decorated player in the class, spent parts of two years as a starter before leaving for Mercer. He is now out of football.

• **Derek Mason's** first class, the 2014 group that Franklin famously pillaged after leaving VU, has fared well under the circumstances. Projected starters include safety **LaDarius Wiley**, cornerback **Tre Herndon**, linebackers **Charles Wright** and **Emmanuel Smith**, guard **Bruno Reagan**, offensive tackle **Bailey Granier**, defensive lineman **Nifae Lealao**, wide receiver **Trent Sherfield** and center **Cole Hardin**.

Five second-teamers, receiver **Caleb Scott**, safety/nickel **Arnold Tarpley**, running back **Khari Blasingame**, fullback **Dallas Rivers** and cornerback **Bryce Lewis**, were also in that class.

Six players from that class are now gone, the only one who contributed much being backup quarterback Wade Freebeck.

• Vanderbilt adds impact transfers in Illinois running back **KeShawn Vaughn**, Ohio State receiver **Alex Stump** and Michigan long-snapper **Scott Sypniewski** this fall. Only Sypniewski, who was on scholarship at UM and was its primary snapper, will be eligible for 2017.

• The only new coaching addition is outside linebackers coach **Warren Belin**, an assistant at VU from 2002 to 2009. He replaces **Osia Lewis,** who is battling liver cancer, but remains on staff as a consultant.

COMMODORES SPRING ROSTER

Quarterbacks	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown
14 Kyle Shurmur	QB	6-4	224	Jr.	Philadelphia, PA
3 Shawn Stankavage	QB	6-2	202	Jr.	Durham, NC
2 Deuce Wallace	QB	6-2	205	Fr.	Sevierville
Running Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
23 Khari Blasingame	RB	6-1	235	Jr.	Huntsville, AL
22 Josh Crawford	RB	5-10	202	Jr.	Montgomery, AL
27 Jaire George	RB	6-1	215	So.	Hyattville, MD
39 Bailey McElwain	FB	6-1	238	So.	Trussville, AL
40 Baffour Osei	RB	5-8	180	Jr.	Accra, Ghana
28 Dallas Rivers	RB	6-1	225	Sr.	Stone Mountain, GA
32 Jamauri Wakefield	RB	6-1	218	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
7 Ralph Webb	RB	5-10	202	Sr.	Gainesville, FL
Wide Receivers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
19 C.J. Duncan	WR	5-11	203	Sr.	Montgomery, AL
36 Trey Ellis	WR	5-9	170	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
16 Kalija Lipscomb	WR	6-1	192	So.	New Orleans, LA
9 Caleb Scott	WR	6-2	202	Sr.	Suwanee, GA
10 Trent Sherfield	WR	6-1	200	Sr.	Danville, IL
4 Donaven Tennyson	WR	5-10	170	So.	Richmond, VA
13 Jackson Winrow	WR	6-1	185	Fr.	Shawnee, OK
Tight Ends	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
82 Turner Cockrell	TE	6-5	230	Fr.	Acworth, GA
84 Sam Dobbs	TE	6-4	230	Jr.	Douglasville, GA
83 Nathan Marcus	TE	6-5	245	Sr.	Glen Ellyn, IL
45 Cody Markel	TE	6-5	245	Fr.	Middleton, Wisc.
80 Jared Pinkney	TE	6-4	250	So.	Norcross, GA
Offensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
53 Sean Auwae-McMoore	OL	6-4	305	Fr.	Kapolei, HI
77 Devin Cochran	OL	6-7	305	Fr.	Norcross, GA
70 Darion DeBrossard	OL	6-4	295	So.	Snellville, GA
76 Egidio DellaRipa	OL	6-4	295	Jr.	Castaic, CA
55 David Floyd	OL	6-5	290	Fr.	Nashville
75 Bailey Granier	OL	6-6	316	Jr.	Galliano, LA
60 Cole Hardin	OL	6-4	305	Jr.	Florence, AL
65 Braden Kopp	OL	6-5	288	Fr.	Houston, TX
57 Ean Pfeifer	OL	6-4	305	So.	Bentonville, AR
61 Bruno Reagan	OG	6-3	315	Jr.	Clarksville
58 Justin Skule	OL	6-6	310	Jr.	Clifton, VA
71 Jared Southers	OL	6-4	310	So.	South Orange, NJ
Defensive Linemen	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
91 Drew Birchmeier	DL	6-4	292	Fr.	Midlothian, VA
77 Nifae Lealao	DT	6-5	312	Sr.	Sacramento, CA
54 Kade Mayle	DL	6-2	275	Jr.	McConnelsville, OH
34 Dare Odeyingbo	DE	6-2	262	Jr.	Irving, TX
57 Josiah Sa'o	DL	6-2	298	Fr.	San Diego, CA
90 Cameron Tidd	DL	6-3	290	Fr.	Greenwood, IN
74 Jay Woods	DL	6-3	292	Sr.	Jackson, GA
49 Jonathan Wynn	DE	6-4	265	Sr.	Stone Mountain, GA
Linebackers	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
20 Oren Burks	OLB	6-3	226	Sr.	Fairfax Station, VA
43 Jordan Griffin	ILB	6-0	226	Jr.	Tampa, FL
42 Kenny Hebert	OLB	6-4	222	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
33 Jay Hockaday	ILB	6-3	228	So.	Nashville
48 Andre Mintze	OLB	6-3	232	Fr.	Philadelphia, PA
7 Dimitri Moore	LB	6-3	208	Fr.	Cedar Hill, TX
9 Caleb Peart	OLB	6-1	234	So.	Chandler, AZ
25 Josh Smith	ILB	6-4	236	Jr.	Murfreesboro
4 Emmanuel Smith	LB	6-2	225	Sr.	Murfreesboro
11 Charles Wright	OLB	6-3	242	Jr.	Irvine, CA
Defensive Backs	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
38 Gil Barksdale	DB	5-10	180	So.	Solon, OH
35 Frank Coppet	DB	5-11	185	Fr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
12 Tae Daley	DB	6-0	185	Fr.	Warner Robins, GA
3 Taurean Ferguson	CB	5-9	190	Sr.	Jonesboro, GA
15 Elijah Hamilton	DB	6-2	195	Fr.	Roswell, GA
31 Tre Herndon	CB	6-1	188	Sr.	Chattanooga
6 Zaire Jones	DB	6-0	198	Fr.	Meridian, MS
30 Bryce Lewis	CB	6-0	185	Jr.	Lilburn, GA
29 Austin Quillen	S	5-11	190	Fr.	Jenks, OK
26 Andrew Rector	S	6-0	198	Jr.	Nashville
21 Donovan Sheffield	CB	5-11	195	Jr.	Nashville
2 Arnold Tarpley	S	6-1	204	Sr.	Pittsburgh, PA
14 Ryan White	S	5-10	192	Sr.	Louisville, KY
13 LaDarius Wiley	S	6-1	205	Sr.	Los Angeles, CA
8 Joejuan Williams	CB	6-3	205	So.	Nashville
Specialist	**Pos.**	**Ht.**	**Wt.**	**Yr.**	**Hometown**
98 Ryley Guay	PK	5-10	170	So.	Naperville, IL
37 Wilson Johnson	SN	6-2	212	Sr.	Nashville
19 Sam Loy	P	6-1	200	So.	San Clemente, CA
97 Reid Nelson	P	6-2	215	Sr.	Hueytown, AL
17 Tommy Openshaw	PK	6-2	200	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
47 Tommy Schiager	SN	6-2	220	Fr.	Portland, Ore.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the program:** "That guy (Derek Mason) has done a good job. Last year, the defense played really well. At Vanderbilt, you've got to give a guy five years. He went to a bowl game in his third year at Vanderbilt. That's a huge accomplishment. If this guy can go to bowls two out of five years, he deserves a chance at a higher-level job.

"Vanderbilt does a great job of developing players and schematically doing what their players can do. They are very well coached on both sides of the ball and they compete. Mason has really done what (Mark) Stoops has done at Kentucky, bringing pride and a competitive spirit so that on any given day, they can get somebody.

• **On 2016 upset of Tennessee:** "Any time Vanderbilt beats Tennessee, they ought to fire the coach at Tennessee. ... Vanderbilt should never beat Tennessee. There's not an excuse on the planet for that."

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
K. Shurmur	13	110.9	204	375	10	54.4	2409	9	76	185.3
W. Freebeck	3	80.5	6	13	1	46.2	77	0	22	25.7

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
C.J. Duncan	13	44	494	11.2	0	31	38.0
T. Sherfield	13	34	472	13.9	1	76	36.3
K. Lipscomb	12	27	319	11.8	2	45	26.6

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Webb	13	250	1323	40	1283	5.1	13	49	98.7
K. Blasingame	13	97	453	4	449	4.6	10	22	34.5
D. Sims	12	41	292	21	271	6.6	1	33	22.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: Z Cunningham 125, L. Wiley 76, R. White 75
Tackles for loss: Z. Cunningham 16.5, A. Butler 7.5, O. Burks 6.5
Sacks: A. Butler 4, O. Burks 3.5, N. Lealao 2.5
Interceptions: T. Herndon 2, O. Burks 1, T. McGaster 1, T. Ferguson 1

247SPORTS COMMODORES RECRUITING 2017

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Dimitri Moore, LB

The early enrollee impressed during spring practices, and now many are expecting the 6-3, 208-pound three-star recruit to have a role on Vanderbilt's defensive this fall. Moore is an athletic defender who can make plays from sideline to sideline.

Dayo Odeyingbo, DE

Standing 6-6, 255 pounds, Odeyingbo already has the build to man the defensive front coming out of high school. The stout strongside defensive end is considered one of the jewels of Vanderbilt's recruiting class. There is a chance Odeyingbo can work his way into the defensive line rotation in his first season on campus.

Randall Haynie, CB

There is a need for corners this fall at Vanderbilt, and the electric 6-0, 180-pound Haynie is expected to help fill that void in his first season. Haynie is a quick and physical prospect hailing from Florida, where he faced many top receivers during his days as a prep.

SLEEPER

Stone Edwards, DE

The three-star recruit jumped on a Vanderbilt offer just before signing day, and the 6-4, 240-pound prospect looks to be the steal of the class for the 'Dores. Edwards is an effective pass-rusher with the frame to really fill out in the years to come.

2018 NEEDS

Vanderbilt did not sign a prep running back in the 2017 class and will lose star ball carrier Ralph Webb after the season. That means signing a feature back in this upcoming 2018 recruiting class will be the top priority of the Commodores.

— By Luke Stampini

247SPORTS COMPOSITE

0	1	17	2
✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪✪	✪✪✪	✪✪

Committments	20
Average Stars	2.95
Total Stars	59
National Rank: 62	SEC: 14

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
Feleti Afemui	LB	6-3	222	✪✪✪	Kahului, HI	Maui
247Sports.com rated No. 9 player in Hawaii… All-State… As a senior, had 61 tackles, including 16 tackles for loss, three quarterback sacks, and three fumbles caused.						
Colin Anderson	LB	6-2	212	✪✪✪	Florence, AL	Brooks
Ranked No. 39 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Had 56 tackles, including 14.5 tackles for loss, three quarterback sacks and three fumbles caused as a senior… As a junior, helped team to state semifinals… All-State… Had 78 tackles, including 17 tackles for loss, and four quarterback sacks.						
Bryce Bailey	OL	6-5	305	✪✪✪	Newburgh, IN	Castle
247Sports.com rated No. 6 player in Indiana… All-State… As a senior, had 25 domination blocks and 12 pancake blocks.						
James Bostic	WR	6-3	205	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Cardinal Gibbons
Had 26 receptions for 415 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior… Played tight end and wide receiver as a junior.						
Jonah Buchanan	DL	6-4	270	✪✪	Honolulu, HI	Iolani
Helped team to state championship finals… As a senior, had 39 tackles, three quarterback sacks and three fumbles recovered.						
Cole Clemens	OL	6-6	305	✪✪✪	South Jordan, UT	Bingham
Ranked No. 14 player in Utah by 247Sports.com… Three-time All-State… Helped team to two consecutive state championships… Had more than 30 knockdown blocks as a senior.						
Tae Daley	DB	6-0	185	✪✪✪	Warner Robins, GA	Northside
247Sports.com rated No. 64 safety nationally… All-State… Helped team to state semifinals… As a senior cornerback, had 84 tackles, five interceptions, eight passes broken up, and four fumbles caused… Had more than 200 career tackles and 13 interceptions.						
Brayden DeVault-Smith	WR	6-3	208	✪✪	Nashville	Pearl-Cohn
Ranked among Top 100 players in Tennessee by 247Sports.com… All-State… Helped team to state championship game… Had 155 tackles, including 26 tackles for loss, and three fumbles caused as a senior… Had 10 receptions, averaging 14 yards per reception.						
Stone Edwards	DL	6-4	240	✪✪✪	Hillsborough, NC	Orange
247Sports.com rated No. 33 player in North Carolina… All-State… As a senior, had 67 tackles, including 23 tackles for loss, and 15 quarterback sacks… Had 26 tackles and four quarterback sacks in five games as a junior.						
Jacob Free	QB	6-4	212	✪✪✪	Brantley, AL	Brantley
Ranked No. 24 pro-style quarterback nationally and No. 31 player in Alabama by 247Sports.com… Had 7,425 career passing yards and 92 touchdowns in three years… All-State… Threw for 2,712 yards and 31 touchdowns as a senior… Averaged more than 40 yards per punt.						
Allan George	DB	6-1	182	✪✪✪	Andalusia, AL	Andalusia
All-State… As a senior, had 49 tackles, seven interceptions and nine passes broken up… Helped team to state semifinals… Returned two punts and one interception for touchdowns.						
Randall Haynie	CB	6-0	180	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Cardinal Gibbons
247Sports.com rated No. 68 cornerback nationally… Played in Blue-Grey All-American Game… Had 43 tackles, nine passes broken up, two fumbles caused and blocked two punts as a senior.						
Grant Miller	OL	6-4	260	✪✪✪	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	St. Thomas Aquinas
Played in Offense-Defense All-American Game… Helped team to state championship… All-State… As a senior, had 28 knockdown blocks, 11 pancake blocks and allowed one quarterback sack.						
Dimitri Moore	LB	6-3	208	✪✪✪	Cedar Hill, TX	Cedar Hill
Ranked No. 44 outside linebacker nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 200 career tackles and 15 quarterback sacks… Had 90 tackles (61 solo), including 18 tackles for loss, and 12 quarterback sacks as a senior… As a junior, had 28 solo tackles and four quarterback sacks.						
Dayo Odeyingbo	DL	6-6	255	✪✪✪	Irving, TX	Carrollton Ranchview
247Sports.com rated No. 27 strongside defensive end nationally… Helped team to three consecutive state playoffs… As a senior, had 47 tackles, including 20 tackles for loss, seven quarterback sacks, and three fumbles caused… Had 25 knockdown blocks.						
Michael Owusu	LB	6-5	210	✪✪✪	Oxnard, CA	Oaks Christian
Ranked No. 74 outside linebacker nationally by 247Sports.com… Had 54 tackles (28 solo) and four quarterback sacks as a senior… As a junior, had 15 receptions.						
Chris Pierce	WR	6-4	208	✪✪✪	Smithfield, VA	Smithfield
247Sports.com rated No. 42 player in Virginia… As a senior, had 43 receptions for 709 yards and 11 touchdowns… Had 47 solo tackles, six tackles for loss and one interception… Had 45 receptions for 776 yards and 13 touchdowns as a junior.						
Jalen Pinkney	DL	6-4	230	✪✪✪	Norcross, GA	Norcross
Ranked No. 47 weakside defensive end nationally by 247Sports.com… Helped team to state playoffs… All-State… Had 71 tackles, including 23 tackles for loss, and 13 quarterback sacks as a senior… As a junior, had 68 tackles and six quarterback sacks.						
Jonathan Stewart	OL	6-8	305	✪✪✪	Lawrenceville, GA	Mountain View
Helped team to state playoffs… As a senior, had 29 knockdown blocks.						
Ke'Shawn Vaughn	RB	5-10	210	✪✪✪✪	Nashville, TN	Illinois
In two years at Illinois, had 1,024 yards rushing and nine touchdowns… Had 723 yards rushing and six touchdowns as a freshman… 2014 Gatorade Tennessee Player of the Year… As a senior, had 2,646 yards rushing and 45 touchdowns.						

PLAYER PROFILE

Webb on Verge of Joining Elite SEC RBs

Herschel Walker, Darren McFadden, Kevin Faulk, Bo Jackson and ... Ralph Webb?

Believe it or not, that could be the top five on the Southeastern Conference's career rushing chart at the end of 2017.

Should Webb, who has 3,342 career yards, just repeat last year's 1,283-yard season, he's got a shot to end his career second only to Walker on that list. (Georgia's Nick Chubb, at 3,424 yards, starts this season ahead of Webb.)

Webb has already left his mark at Vandy, passing Zac Stacy as Vanderbilt's all-time and single-season leading rusher late last season. He's VU's single-season leader for rushing yards by a freshman (907), sophomore (1,152) and junior. He ended 2016 as VU's career leader in rushing touchdowns (31) and carries (739), too.

That last total is 255 off Walker's career SEC mark, but it's one that Vanderbilt might prefer Webb not break. As durable as he's been, he was noticeably hobbled against Kentucky in Game 6, and consequently was held below 50 yards in three of his next four contests, something that didn't happen once in 2015. Fifty-five career catches have added to the workload.

Of the aforementioned four SEC greats, only Faulk (second round, 1999) wasn't a first-round draft pick. The first round likewise may not be in the cards for Webb.

He lacks the breakaway speed of those backs — one reason that VU was his only SEC offer, despite being a first-team, all-state pick right under Florida's nose in Gainesville — and the fact that he played some on coverage teams last year may not be coincidental, in terms of his NFL future.

But those other guys also had significant advantages, compared to Webb. For his first 2 1/2 seasons at Vandy, the Commodores fielded one of the worst passing attacks in the FBS. Nor did Webb have the luxury of running behind an All-SEC lineman until left tackle Will Holden received second-team honors last season.

RB

Ralph Webb

Photo by Dale Zanine-USA TODAY Sports

"I think what Ralph Webb has done over his career is show that he can be durable, that he's going to be a consistent earner in this conference, but more than anything else, he's a leader, a tremendous leader who's got tremendous competitive spirit," coach Derek Mason said.

"He looks to lead this 2017 team where we're trying to go."

For more coverage visit lindyssports.com/college-football/sec/vanderbilt

BEST AND BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

RB RALPH WEBB

Named second team All-SEC in 2016. ... Has started all 37 games of his VU career. ... Holds Vanderbilt's career record with 3,734 yards from scrimmage. ... Uses superior vision to consistently find the hole and is tough to bring down without help. ... Longest run of his career was a 74-yard scoring scamper at Florida in 2015. ... Named one of two team captains for 2016.

EMERGING STAR

CB JOEJUAN WILLIAMS

Was ranked among top 20 cornerbacks for the 2016 class by 247Sports.com, and as the No. 2 player in Tennessee, before he was ruled ineligible after transferring for his senior season. ... His combination of size (6-3, 205), strength and ball-skills make him a potential lock-down corner. ... As a true freshman in 2016, he spelled starting senior cornerback Torren McGaster more often as the season progressed. ... Contributed 19 tackles (14 solo, 1.5 for loss) with two pass break-ups.

TOP NEWCOMER

LT DEVIN COCHRAN

Was listed as Vanderbilt's backup at left tackle all last season but never played a snap, preserving a year of eligibility. ... A physical marvel who efficiently distributes 305 pounds across his 6-7 frame. ... Ended the spring as Vandy's second-team left tackle, but he may be most suited for the starting role once he gains a little experience. ... The former three-star recruit had offers from Georgia, Miami (Fla.) and Tennessee, among others.

CLEMSON | TIGERS

ACC rank: 2 Record: 14-1 ACC record: 7-1 (T-1st, Atlantic) Stadium: Clemson Memorial (81,500)

TIGERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Clemson, S.C.
COACH: Dabo Swinney — At Clemson and overall: 89-28, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Tony Elliott, Jeff Scott
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Venables

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2016
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 13, 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kelly Bryant, RB Tavien Feaster, WR Deon Cain, WR Hunter Renfrow, DE Clelin Ferrell, DT Christian Wilkins, DT Dexter Lawrence, SS Van Smith

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line is elite. That will help keep the Tigers among the nation's top defenses. The receiving corps has more talented pass-catchers than it can get on the field at one time, and those guys will help whichever QB wins the job. The offensive line, replacing only center Jay Guillermo, will be a strength.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Deshaun Watson ended last season as the best QB in the nation and a national champion, but he, along with WR Mike Williams and RB Wayne Gallman, won't be walking through that door. That's a ton of production to replace, and there's not a surefire starter at quarterback heading into the season. The running game, without a proven workhorse, could rely on a committee to move the chains.

OFFENSE

What the defending national champions will look like on offense without Deshaun Watson and three other stars is still a guess.

It'll depend greatly on which quarterback the Tigers settle on. If it's junior Kelly Bryant, who's thrown 18 career passes, expect a heavy lean on the run game. He's one of the team's most athletic players and is difficult to bring down in the open field, but his passing consistency is a huge question mark.

Clemson might be a better passing team with either true freshman Hunter Johnson, redshirt freshman Zerrick Cooper or sophomore Tucker Israel, but this is an offense that relies on the QB run. None of these options is Watson.

The Tigers will miss tight end Jordan Leggett and running back Wayne Gallman, but talented skill players return. C.J. Fuller, Tavien Feaster and Adam Choice each bring something different to the backfield. The offensive line replaces only one starter.

The receiving corps could end up being the best in the conference, even with Mike Williams in the NFL. Deon Cain's 14 touchdowns the last two seasons make him a blossoming star. Ray-Ray McCloud looks greatly improved, and freshman Tee Higgins has drawn comparisons to A.J. Green. And don't forget about Hunter Renfrow, the former walk-on who caught the title-winning touchdown against Alabama.

DEFENSE

Even though Brent Venables had the one of the top ranked defenses in 2014, this could be his best unit.

The defensive line is unmatched. Preseason All-American Christian Wilkins, who had 12.5 tackles for a loss in 2016, moves back to the inside after playing end last year. He'll team with tackle Dexter Lawrence, the 340-pound 2016 ACC Defensive Rookie of the Year. Clelin Ferrell came on strong late last season and could be a double-digit sack performer this year, while junior Austin Bryant is finally healthy on the other side.

DEXTER LAWRENCE
Photo by Ric Tapia via AP

"We recruited all four of them and signed them all for a reason. We would never have signed them if we didn't believe in them."
— Coach Dabo Swinney, on his quarterback battle

The linebackers will miss the leadership and tenacity of Ben Boulware, but middle linebacker Tre Lamar is a 6-3, 240-pound run-stopper. That will allow veteran starter Kendall Joseph to move to the outside. Dorian O'Daniel, who made 10 starts in 2016, had a strong spring.

The secondary is three-deep on each side at corner, led by senior Ryan Carter. Junior Van Smith will take on the leadership role at safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Greg Huegel has made 41 of 51 field-goal attempts in the past two years, but needs more touchbacks on his kickoffs. Punter Will Spiers had the most consistent spring and could be an upgrade from his predecessor, Andy Teasdall, who averaged 36.7 yards per punt last year.

OVERVIEW

Clemson is now an elite program. With a dominant defense and one of the top coaching staffs in the country, the Tigers shouldn't suffer a huge drop-off. While a third consecutive College Football Playoff berth won't be easy, the Tigers are good enough to contend in the ACC. Can they get enough scoring production to survive Auburn, Louisville and Florida State?

— Brad Senkiw

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Hunter Johnson: The freshman from Brownsburg, Ind., was one of the top QB prospects in the 2017 recruiting class. Johnson enrolled early to battle for the starting job, and he showed a strong arm and enough athletic mobility to run Clemson's offense during the spring, allowing him to compete for time right away.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	2	Kelly Bryant	6-3	215	Jr.
RB	27	C.J. Fuller	5-10	215	Jr.
WR	8	Deon Cain	6-1	210	Jr.
WR	**13**	**Hunter Renfrow***	**5-11**	**180**	**Jr.**
WR	34	Ray-Ray McCloud	5-10	180	Jr.
TE	80	Milan Richard	6-3	260	Jr.
LT	**75**	**Mitch Hyatt***	**6-5**	**295**	**Jr.**
LG	**51**	**Taylor Hearn***	**6-5**	**325**	**Jr.**
C	50	Justin Falcinelli	6-4	315	Jr.
RG	**55**	**Tyrone Crowder***	**6-2**	**340**	**Sr.**
RT	**76**	**Sean Pollard***	**6-5**	**315**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	91	Austin Bryant	6-4	265	Jr.
DT	**42**	**Christian Wilkins***	**6-4**	**310**	**Jr.**
DT	**90**	**Dexter Lawrence***	**6-5**	**340**	**So.**
DE	**99**	**Clelin Ferrell***	**6-5**	**265**	**So.**
LB	**34**	**Kendall Joseph***	**6-0**	**230**	**Jr.**
LB	57	Tre Lamar	6-3	240	So.
LB	**6**	**Dorian O'Daniel***	**6-1**	**215**	**Sr.**
CB	2	Mark Fields	5-10	180	Jr.
CB	**31**	**Ryan Carter***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
SS	**23**	**Van Smith***	**5-11**	**195**	**Jr.**
FS	19	Tanner Muse	6-2	220	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**92**	**Greg Huegel***	**5-11**	**195**	**Jr.**
P	48	Will Spiers	6-5	230	Fr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	KENT STATE
Sept. 9	AUBURN
Sept. 16	at Louisville
Sept. 23	BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 30	at Virginia Tech
Oct. 7	WAKE FOREST
Oct. 13	at Syracuse
Oct. 28	GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 04	at NC State
Nov. 11	FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 18	THE CITADEL
Nov. 25	at South Carolina

2016 RESULTS

W	at Auburn	19-13
W	TROY	30-24
W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	59-0
W	at Georgia Tech	26-7
W	LOUISVILLE	42-36
W	at Boston College	56-10
W	NC STATE (OT)	24-17
W	at Florida State	37-34
W	SYRACUSE	54-0
L	PITTSBURGH	42-43
W	at Wake Forest	35-13
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	56-7
	ACC Championship Game	
W	vs. Virginia Tech	42-35
	Fiesta Bowl - Semifinal	
W	vs. Ohio State	31-0
	National Championship Game	
W	vs. Alabama	35-31

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.2	14
Rushing	169.7	71
Passing	333.9	7
Total	503.7	12

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.0	10
Rushing	129.6	24
Passing	181.9	14
Total	311.5	8

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 1	- 0.07	71

COASTAL CAROLINA | CHANTICLEERS

Sun Belt rank: 10 **Record: 10-2 FCS independent** **Stadium: Brooks Stadium (15,000)**

CHANTICLEERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Conway, S.C.
COACH: Joe Moglia — At Coastal Carolina and overall, 51-15, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jamey Chadwell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mickey Matthews

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2014, Big South co-champ
LAST BOWL: N/A
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 3 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Austin Wilson, RB Osharmar Abercrombie, RB Marcus Outlow, WR Chris Jones, LB Shane Johnson, DE Marcus Williamson, CB Anthony Chesley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Despite the loss of De'Angelo Henderson (1,156 yards), running back has nice depth with Outlow and Abercrombie leading the way. Moglia is an innovative coach who has done wonders with a team at a school whose athletic program is on the rise.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Quarterback needs to get settled. Depth at receiver could be a concern. Sack leaders Alex Scearce (eight) and Jabarai Bothwell (5.5) are gone, as well as the players who accounted for 16 of the team's 21 interceptions in 2016.

OFFENSE

Despite the return of senior Tyler Keane, who started seven games last year, Coastal Carolina will go into fall camp with an unsettled quarterback position when it embarks on its first season on the FBS level as a member of the Sun Belt.

Syracuse graduate transfer Austin Wilson took the most snaps in the spring game, but the competition is still considered a three-way race among Wilson, Keane and sophomore Austin Bradley. Senior Josh Stilley, recovering from a knee injury in the spring, is a fourth candidate.

Wilson played in two games at Syracuse last year; he relieved an injured Eric Dungey against Clemson and completed 17 of 27 passes for 116 yards in the 54-0 loss. He appeared in nine career games, with two starts, and completed 49 of 85 passes for 418 yards, with one touchdown and seven interceptions.

Keane was 67 of 105 passing for 809 yards and 10 touchdowns with two picks before becoming yet another victim in the long line of injured Chanticleer quarterbacks. Bradley completed 7 of 20 attempts in seven appearances. Stilley was 33 of 54 in three games before his injury.

The Chanticleers lose their top two rushers, but add Boston College transfer Marcus Outlow to the backfield. He joins senior Osharmar Abercrombie, who rushed for 396 yards in eight games.

DEFENSE

The departure of linebacker Alex Scearce leaves a huge hole in the defense.

He led the team in tackles (84), tackles for loss (13.5), sacks (eight), interceptions (five), passes defended (12) and forced fumbles (three). He had to share team honors in fumble recoveries with tackle Jabarai Bothwell with two.

But six starters return, including linebacker Shane Johnson, who had 66 tackles despite missing two early games to injury, and defensive ends Marcus Williamson and Myles White, who combined for seven sacks last year.

CHRIS JONES
Photo courtesy of Coastal Carolina

"We're running the spread-option. Before, we just ran the spread."
— Coach Joe Moglia, on CCU's new offense

Other returning starters are end Tarrol Stafford, tackle Dwayne Price, linebacker Kerron Johnson and cornerback Anthony Chesley. All have shown playmaking ability, with Stafford credited with four tackles for loss, Price with 25 stops, Johnson with an interception to go with three tackles for loss, and Chesley with two interceptions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Evan Rabon has the unusual ability to kick with either foot. He punted left-footed for an average of 39.0 yards last year, but the former soccer player will use his right foot in competing with junior Masamitsu Ishibashi for field-goal duty in 2017. Wideouts Jones and Ky'Jon Tyler will handle returns again. Tyler ran back two kickoffs for touchdowns last year.

OVERVIEW

Coastal Carolina hopes to duplicate the success Appalachian State and Georgia Southern had in jumping from the FCS level into the Sun Belt. The Chanticleers were 10-2 last year, with the losses by a total of two points. Despite some key personnel losses, they look to be a competitive Sun Belt team and could flirt with a break-even season.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Marcus Outlow: Outlow sat out last year after transferring from Boston College, where in two years he rushed for 484 yards on 112 carries (4.3 average). He started three games as a sophomore in 2015 and one as a freshman. He also had 15 receptions for 156 yards in his two seasons.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	10	Austin Wilson	6-2	220	Sr.
RB	32	Osharmar Abercrombie	5-9	205	Sr.
RB	21	Marcus Outlow	5-10	205	Jr.
WR	19	Ky'Jon Tyler	5-9	165	So.
WR	**8**	**Chris Jones***	**5-11**	**170**	**Sr.**
TE	88	Laquay Brown	6-2	225	Jr.
LT	75	Ethan Howard	6-6	275	So.
LG	**65**	**Adam Lawhorn***	**6-2**	**310**	**Jr.**
C	**59**	**Jamarion McBride***	**6-1**	**320**	**Jr.**
RG	71	Jack Flood	6-4	295	Jr.
RT	72	Peter Battaglia	6-4	270	So.

DEFENSE

DE	**95**	**Tarrol Stafford***	**6-2**	**255**	**Jr.**
DT	93	Ja'Ree Tolbert	6-0	265	Jr.
DT	**90**	**Dwayne Price***	**6-2**	**270**	**Sr.**
DE	**51**	**Marcus Williamson***	**6-3**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	30	Laqavious Paul	5-11	210	So.
LB	**9**	**Shane Johnson***	**6-1**	**240**	**Sr.**
NB	**6**	**Kerron Johnson***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
CB	**17**	**Anthony Chesley***	**5-11**	**185**	**Jr.**
CB	2	Dontay Hears	5-11	180	Sr.
S	11	Nicholas Clark	5-11	150	Sr.
S	33	Allen Hall	6-0	190	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	95	Masamitsu Ishibashi	5-10	165	Sr.
P	**35**	**Evan Rabon***	**6-0**	**160**	**Jr.**

***Returning starters in Bold**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 16	at UAB
Sept. 23	WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 30	at ULM
Oct. 7	GEORGIA STATE
Oct. 14	at Arkansas State
Oct. 21	at Appalachian State
Oct. 28	TEXAS STATE
Nov. 4	at Arkansas
Nov. 11	TROY
Nov. 18	at Idaho
Dec. 2	GEORGIA SOUTHERN

2016 RESULTS

W	at Lamar	38-14
W	FLORIDA A&M	49-10
L	at Jacksonville State	27-26
W	FURMAN	41-21
L	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	59-58
W	at Gardner-Webb	17-7
W	CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE	33-25
W	at Presbyterian	48-17
W	MONMOUTH	38-17
W	BRYANT	31-21
W	LIBERTY	42-7
W	HAMPTON	26-7

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	37.3	—
Rushing	254.3	—
Passing	133.3	—
Total	387.6	—

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.3	—
Rushing	123.7	—
Passing	208.1	—
Total	331.8	—

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 11	+ 0.92	—

FLORIDA ATLANTIC | OWLS

C-USA rank: 11 Record: 3-9 C-USA record: 2-6 (T-6th, East) Stadium: FAU Stadium (29,419)

OWLS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Boca Raton, Florida
COACH: Lane Kiffin — At FAU, 1st year; overall, 35-21, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kendal Briles
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Kiffin

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST BOWL: 2008, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Devin Singletary, WR Kalib Woods, LT Reggie Bain, LB Azeez Al-Shaair, SS Jalen Young, FS Andrew Soroh

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Owls should be fine at quarterback and wide receiver, and they have depth at running back. The return of Bain is a plus for the O-line. LG Tarrick Thomas also returns; he started the first four games before going out with a season-ending injury.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Depth on the offensive line could be an issue, and the defensive front six is a major concern. Al-Shaair and DE Haiden Nagel are the only returning starters there, though LB Khantrell Burden had five starts. The Owls had the worst defense in the conference last year and have a long way to go before even reaching the "average" level.

OFFENSE

Junior Jason Driskel and sophomore De'Andre Johnson will continue the quarterback battle they had in the spring when fall camp opens for first-year coach Lane Kiffin.

Driskel started 11 games last year, completing 61.2 percent of his passes for 201.2 yards a game. Johnson started his collegiate career at Florida State, but was dismissed after an off-campus incident. He played for East Mississippi Community College last season, completing 60.6 percent of his passes for 2,646 yards and 26 touchdowns, going undefeated as a starter.

The situation at running back also is in good hands. Senior Greg Howell Jr. started 10 games and rushed for 828 yards last year, and Devin Singletary rushed for 1,021 yards and started the season finale as a true freshman. Sophomore Kerrith Whyte Jr. (145 yards) had one start.

Seniors Kalib Woods (68 catches, 934 yards) and Henry Bussey III (24-269 with three starts) return at wide receiver. Senior Kamrin Solomon had a huge spring.

A big plus is the return of tackle Reggie Bain, a two-year starter who missed the 2016 campaign after being injured in a motor scooter accident before the season.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Chris Kiffin (Lane Kiffin's younger brother) is installing a 4-2-5 scheme that may be more effective against the spread offenses so prevalent in C-USA. At least that's the hope since the Owls were last in the conference in scoring defense, rushing defense and total defense.

The Owls lose league Defensive Player of the Year Trey Hendrickson (50 tackles, 9.5 sacks), and linebacker Nate Ozdemir (53 tackles) has given up football to pursue a career in the military. He started eight games last year, missing the last four with a broken foot.

The Owls, however, welcome back junior linebacker Azeez Al-Shaair, their leading tackler last year with 113 stops (12 for loss), and free safety Jalen Young. Young was No. 2 with 100 tackles in 11 games. He also intercepted two passes.

As with Bain on the offensive line, the Owls get back a key big man who missed the 2016 season. Junior tackle Ray Ellis, a projected starter in 2016 after recording 24 tackles in 11 games in 2015, is coming back from a knee injury.

DEVIN SINGLETARY
Photo by Trask Smith/CSM via AP Images

"He has a chance to be a really special player."
— Coach Lane Kiffin, on sophomore RB Devin Singletary

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior Greg Joseph is 42 of 61 on field-goal attempts in his career and looks to add punting to his responsibilities. Bussey and Young shared punt-return responsibilities last year, and Kerrith Whyte Jr. was the primary kickoff returner.

OVERVIEW

All eyes will be on Kiffin, who has some nice talent at the skill positions on offense, but the key for the Owls to move up in the league will be how they fare in the trenches on both sides of the ball. They should improve on the three wins they had in 2016, but getting to six wins and bowl eligibility is going to require a break or two.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

QB De'Andre Johnson: Johnson comes to FAU with some baggage — Florida State dismissed him when video showed him striking a female student in a bar — but he does have talent. He joins a crowded competition at a position that returns starter Jason Driskel and last year's backup Daniel Parr.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	16	**Jason Driskel***	6-2	210	Jr.
RB	5	Devin Singletary	5-9	200	So.
WR	1	Henry Bussey III	5-9	180	Sr.
WR	15	Kamrin Solomon	6-2	205	Sr.
WR	4	**Kalib Woods***	6-3	193	Sr.
TE	10	Dustin Bowens	6-4	250	Jr.
LT	58	Reggie Bain	6-4	300	Jr.
LG	65	Tarrick Thomas	6-4	280	So.
C	64	**Antonyo Woods***	6-3	295	Sr.
RG	53	**Jakobi Smith***	6-3	300	Sr.
RT	57	**Matt Weiner***	6-4	275	Jr.

DEFENSE

DE	94	Hunter Snyder	6-7	260	Jr.
DT	11	Ray Ellis	6-1	285	Jr.
DT	42	William Davis	6-0	265	So.
DE	98	**Haiden Nagel***	6-4	255	Sr.
LB	49	Khantrell Burden	6-1	205	Jr.
LB	2	**Azeez Al-Shaair***	6-2	220	Jr.
CB	26	Chris Tooley	5-11	178	So.
CB	23	**Raekwon Williams***	5-11	185	Sr.
NB	1	**Ocie Rose***	6-2	190	Jr.
SS	18	**Jalen Young***	5-11	185	Jr.
FS	14	**Andrew Soroh***	6-2	210	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	17	**Greg Joseph***	6-1	210	Sr.
P	17	Greg Joseph	6-1	210	Sr.

***Returning starters in Bold**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NAVY
Sept. 9	at Wisconsin
Sept. 16	BETHUNE COOKMAN
Sept. 23	at Buffalo
Sept. 30	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 7	at Old Dominion
Oct. 21	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 28	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 3	MARSHALL
Nov. 11	at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 18	FIU
Nov. 25	at Charlotte

2016 RESULTS

W	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS	38-30
L	at Miami	10-38
L	at Kansas State	7-63
L	BALL STATE	27-31
L	at FIU	31-33
L	CHARLOTTE	23-28
L	at Marshall	21-27
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY	3-52
W	at Rice	42-25
W	UTEP	35-31
L	OLD DOMINION	24-42
L	at Middle Tennessee	56-77

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.4	T-80
Rushing	188.2	51
Passing	210.1	88
Total	398.3	72

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.8	123
Rushing	245.4	119
Passing	268.4	110
Total	513.8	124

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 5	- 0.42	98

FLORIDA INT'L | GOLDEN PANTHERS

C-USA rank: 7 | Record: 4-8 | C-USA record: 4-4 (4th, East) | Stadium: FIU Stadium (20,000)

GOLDEN PANTHERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Miami
COACH: Butch Davis — At FIU: 1st year; overall: 79-43, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rich Skrosky
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Guy

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010, Sun Belt co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2011, Beef 'O' Brady's
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 6 offense, 9 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Alex McGough, RB Alex Gardner, WR Thomas Owens, WR Stantley Thomas, DE Fermin Silva, LB Anthony Wint, LB Treyvon Williams, S Niko Gonzalez

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Panthers have experience in the backfield with the return of McGough and Gardner. Owens, last year's No. 1 pass catcher, leads a solid wide receiver corps. Defensively, Williams was the leading tackler last year, and Wint was second-team all-conference. The secondary is a solid group.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Only two starters return on the offensive line, and one of them (Kai Absheer) is in a new position. The departures of Jonnu Smith, who exhausted his eligibility, and A.J. Branisel, who left the program a year early, leave a gap at tight end. The kicking game is only so-so.

ANTHONY WINT
Photo by Samuel Lewis/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

OFFENSE

With a fourth-year starter at quarterback — and the top rusher and receiver back from last year — veteran coach Butch Davis has some firepower at his disposal in his first season at FIU.

Senior quarterback Alex McGough's 2016 season was cut short by injuries, but he still has started 30 of 33 games over the past three years. He completed 58.4 percent of his attempts last year, down from 64 percent the year before, for 210 yards per game.

Senior running back Alex Gardner averaged 5.1 yards per carry last season for 930 yards. Senior wide receiver Thomas Owens made 47 catches for 652 yards to give him 98 receptions for 1,290 yards and 15 touchdowns over the past two seasons.

Wide receiver Stantley Thomas, who had had 35 receptions for 485 yards as a true freshman last year, is a returning starter.

The other two returning starters are offensive linemen Kai Absheer, who is moving from right guard to left tackle, and right tackle Daquane Wilkie.

In addition to three new starters on the line, A.J. Sattinger, a graduate transfer from Coastal Carolina, looks to take over Jonnu Smith's spot at tight end.

DEFENSE

The Panthers welcome back eight players who started at least six games in 2016. Trouble is, that unit surrendered an average of 34.8 points and 434.6 yards a game, including 198.8 on the ground.

Those weren't the worst numbers in the conference, but they were no better than mid-pack.

But there are legitimate all-conference candidates — junior Fermin Silva at end, Anthony Wint and Treyvon Williams at linebacker, Niko Gonzalez at safety and Isaiah Brown at corner.

Wint was a second-team All-Sun Belt pick in each of the past two seasons, and Williams was the leading tackler with 109 stops (three sacks) last year. Silva had five sacks, and Gonzalez had 55 tackles and an interception despite missing three games to injury. Brown had three interceptions to account for half of the team's picks.

> "If you're going to be a really good football team you've got to win the line of scrimmage."
>
> — Coach Butch Davis

Sophomore Sage Lewis (27 tackles as a freshman) looks ticketed to fill a vacancy at linebacker. Junior Milord Juste (two starts in 2016) was No. 1 at the other tackle spot coming out of spring.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior Stone Wilson returns after averaging only 37.6 yards on 61 punts last year; he averaged just over 40 yards as a freshman. The Panthers will have a new kicker to take over for Austin Taylor. That likely will be junior Scott Wade. Owens and Gaiter have handled punt returns; Gardner and running back Anthony Jones were the primary kickoff returners last year.

OVERVIEW

Davis built a national championship team at Miami (although it was Larry Coker who cashed in on that work). Can he resurrect an FIU team that hasn't had a winning season since 2011? Experience could give the Panthers a shot, despite three road games in September.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

TE A.J. Sattinger: Sattinger, from Clearwater, Fla., started seven games last year at Coastal Carolina before transferring to FIU. He had eight receptions for 91 yards after having 11 catches for 107 yards in 2015. He fills a position of need.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	12	**Alex McGough***	6-3	218	Sr.
RB	1	**Alex Gardner***	5-10	192	Sr.
WR	81	**Thomas Owens***	6-1	198	Sr.
WR	21	**Stantley Thomas***	6-2	185	So.
WR	16	Tony Gaiter IV	5-9	178	So.
TE	88	A.J. Sattinger	6-2	225	Sr.
LT	79	**Kai Absheer***	6-5	305	Jr.
LG	60	Dallas Connell	6-3	283	So.
C	76	Neal Mars	6-3	287	Jr.
RG	69	Chris Miller	6-4	328	Jr.
RT	65	**Daquane Wilkie***	6-3	284	Jr.

DEFENSE

DE	7	**Fermin Silva***	6-2	234	Jr.
DT	99	**Jermaine Sheriff***	6-2	250	Jr.
DT	46	Milord Juste	6-0	268	Jr.
DE	97	**Newton Salisbury***	6-3	246	Sr.
LB	52	**Treyvon Williams***	6-0	229	Sr.
LB	53	**Anthony Wint***	6-0	224	Sr.
LB	47	Sage Lewis	6-1	232	So.
CB	13	**Isaiah Brown***	6-1	178	So.
CB	20	**Emmanuel Lubin***	6-1	187	Jr.
S	33	**Niko Gonzalez***	5-11	191	Sr.
S	27	**Xavier Hines***	5-11	189	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	96	Scott Wade	6-0	200	Jr.
P	6	**Stone Wilson***	5-10	178	Jr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at UCF
Sept. 9	ALCORN STATE
Sept. 16	at Indiana
Sept. 23	at Rice
Sept. 30	CHARLOTTE
Oct. 7	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 14	TULANE
Oct. 28	at Marshall
Nov. 4	UTSA
Nov. 11	OLD DOMINION
Nov. 18	at FAU
Nov. 25	WESTERN KENTUCKY

2016 RESULTS

L	INDIANA	13-34
L	MARYLAND	14-41
L	at Massachusetts	13-21
L	UCF	14-53
W	FAU	33-31
W	at UTEP	35-21
W	at Charlotte	27-26
L	LOUISIANA TECH	24-44
L	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	35-42
L	at Western Kentucky	21-49
W	MARSHALL	31-14
L	at Old Dominion	28-42

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.0	106
Rushing	148.6	97
Passing	226.7	69
Total	375.3	98

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.8	104
Rushing	198.8	86
Passing	235.8	76
Total	434.6	86

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 9	- 0.75	T-117

FLORIDA STATE | SEMINOLES

ACC rank: 1 Record: 10-3 ACC record: 5-3 (3rd, Atlantic) Stadium: Doak Campbell Stadium (79,560)

SEMINOLES at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Tallahassee, Fla.
COACH: Jimbo Fisher — At Florida State and overall: 78-17, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Randy Sanders, Lawrence Dawsey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charles Kelly

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2014
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1981
RETURNING STARTERS: 13, 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Deondre Francois, RB Jacques Patrick, WR Nyqwan Murray, DE Josh Sweat, DE Brian Burns, DT Derrick Nnadi, CB Tarvarus McFadden, S Derwin James

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: FSU is loaded with talented running backs, and Francois is more comfortable in his role as a starting quarterback and leader. The offense should again be balanced and dynamic. James' return from injury will help strengthen a defense that was often picked apart by elite quarterbacks last season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line allowed 36 sacks and other frequent hits on Francois. If he goes down, FSU will have to turn to an unproven backup. FSU doesn't have much experience at wideout after projected starting receivers Nyqwan Murray (27 catches, 441 yards, five TDs in 2016) and Auden Tate (25 catches, 409 yards, six TDs).

OFFENSE

Florida State's Jimbo Fisher is known as a coach who has developed quarterbacks, from Christian Ponder to EJ Manuel to Jameis Winston and now Deondre Francois. But Fisher places a high value on the running game and balance in the Seminoles' pro-style offense.

Dalvin Cook departs as the school's single-season and career rushing leader, but this spring showed that FSU is still loaded at tailback. Junior Jacques Patrick has 664 career rushing yards and has averaged at least five yards per carry in the past two seasons. FSU also landed 247Sports' No. 1 tailback, Cam Akers, and the early enrollee impressed this spring with his vision and versatility.

Francois threw for 3,350 yards, 20 touchdowns and just seven interceptions in an efficient redshirt freshman season in which FSU averaged 33.6 points per game against FBS opponents. He evolved into a mature leader but must develop a better internal clock, delivering passes quicker. And while he was accurate on intermediate and deep throws, he needs to improve his touch on short passes.

FSU's most glaring weakness is an offensive line that struggled in pass protection. Redshirt freshman left tackle Josh Ball is a rising star who should step in for Roderick Johnson, who left early for the NFL.

DEFENSE

FSU's defense had plenty of stars in 2016, but the loss of safety Derwin James in Week Two to a season-ending meniscus injury was difficult to overcome. James had 91 tackles and 4.5 sacks as a freshman in 2015. Now that James is healthy, there is optimism that the Seminoles will again have one of the nation's top defenses.

FSU was second nationally with 51 sacks in 2016. Even with DeMarcus Walker (16 sacks) moving on to the NFL, the Seminoles feature a deep group. Brian Burns (9.5 sacks) and Josh Sweat (seven sacks) are athletic ends, and tackle Derrick Nnadi (six sacks) is consistently able to collapse the pocket.

Tarvarus McFadden developed into an All-American cornerback with eight interceptions last season. The Seminoles play five defensive backs in their base formation, and Fisher has praised Levonta Taylor and Kyle Meyers as players who could start at corner or nickel.

DEONDRE FRANCOIS
Photo by Joe Robbins

"If it doesn't go well in our group, I don't think we can get it done this year."
— DE Josh Sweat, on the importance of FSU's pass rush

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ricky Aguayo made all 12 field-goal attempts inside 40 yards as a freshman in 2016, but he was just 7 of 14 from beyond that distance. Leg strength is not the problem. Logan Tyler averaged just 40.3 yards per punt last year, but showed much-improved hang time in FSU's spring game.

OVERVIEW

The Seminoles have all of the pieces to challenge for an ACC title and a spot in the College Football Playoff. But the schedule is daunting. After opening in Atlanta vs. Alabama, FSU also has to travel to Clemson and Florida, while hosting Louisville and Miami. But FSU won't face any of those opponents in back-to-back games, giving the Seminoles time to regroup between showdowns.

— Bob Ferrante

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Cam Akers: The nation's top prep tailback enrolled early at FSU and turned heads in the spring game with a 10-carry, 87-yard performance. The 5-11, 213-pound Akers displayed a physical running style, as well as breakaway speed in the open field. Akers may not start right away, but he's certainly shown he will make an impact in the fall.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	12	**Deondre Francois***	6-2	205	So.
RB	9	Jacques Patrick	6-2	231	Jr.
WR	8	Nyqwan Murray	5-11	176	Jr.
WR	18	Auden Tate	6-5	225	Jr.
WR	89	Keith Gavin	6-3	225	So.
TE	81	**Ryan Izzo***	6-5	245	Jr.
LT	79	Josh Ball	6-8	287	Fr.
LG	69	**Landon Dickerson***	6-5	310	So.
C	54	**Alec Eberle***	6-4	294	Jr.
RG	70	Cole Minshew	6-5	338	Fr.
RT	76	Rick Leonard	6-7	306	Sr.

DEFENSE

DE	9	**Josh Sweat***	6-5	250	Jr.
DT	91	**Derrick Nnadi***	6-1	312	Sr.
DT	90	**Demarcus Christmas***	6-4	308	Jr.
DE	99	Brian Burns	6-5	218	So.
LB	6	**Matthew Thomas***	6-3	227	Sr.
LB	18	**Ro'Derrick Hoskins***	6-2	240	Sr.
CB	4	**Tarvarus McFadden***	6-2	198	Jr.
CB	37	Kyle Meyers	6-0	168	So.
STAR	1	Levonta Taylor	5-10	169	So.
S	3	Derwin James	6-3	211	So.
S	20	**Trey Marshall***	6-0	210	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	23	**Ricky Aguayo***	6-2	196	So.
P	21	**Logan Tyler***	6-0	200	So.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Alabama (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 9	ULM
Sept. 16	MIAMI
Sept. 23	NC STATE
Sept. 30	at Wake Forest
Oct. 14	at Duke
Oct. 21	LOUISVILLE
Oct. 27	at Boston College
Nov. 4	SYRACUSE
Nov. 11	at Clemson
Nov. 18	DELAWARE STATE
Nov. 25	at Florida

2016 RESULTS

W	vs. Ole Miss (Orlando, FL)	45-34
W	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	52-8
L	at Louisville	20-63
W	at South Florida	55-35
L	NORTH CAROLINA	35-37
W	at Miami	20-19
W	WAKE FOREST	17-6
L	CLEMSON	34-37
W	at NC State	24-20
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	45-7
W	at Syracuse	45-14
W	FLORIDA	31-13
	Orange Bowl	
W	vs. Michigan	33-32

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.1	T-31
Rushing	202.3	40
Passing	264.1	33
Total	466.4	25

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.0	T-44
Rushing	128.0	21
Passing	221.1	57
Total	349.1	22

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 3	+ 0.23	T-42

GEORGIA SOUTHERN | EAGLES

Sun Belt rank: 4 Record: 5-7 Sun Belt record: 4-4 (6th) Stadium: Allen E. Paulson Stadium (25,000)

EAGLES at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Statesboro, Ga.
COACH: Tyson Summers — At Georgia Southern and overall: 5-7, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryan Cook
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lorenzo Costantini

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2014
LAST BOWL: 2015, GoDaddy Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Shai Werts, RB Wesley Fields, WR Myles Campbell, DE Logan Hunt, DT Darrius Sapp, LB Chris DeLaRosa, FS Joshua Moon, SS Jay Bowdry, CB Jessie Liptrot

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offensive line returns intact with the exception of center Andy Kwon, but the return of LT Tommy Boynton — who started as a true freshman, but was injured in preseason camp last year — enables Jeremiah Culbreth to move to center. Fields is a fast, physical running back. Campbell leads a talented wide receiver group.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The biggest question is at quarterback. Werts will probably wind up the starter, but he did not show in the spring he was ready to throw the ball with any consistency. Depth on both lines could be an issue.

WESLEY FIELDS
Photo by AP Photo/David Goldman

OFFENSE

Georgia Southern will return to its roots after one of the most disappointing seasons in school history.

The 2016 Eagles, coming off a 9-3 season with 98 percent of its offense returning, went an underachieving 5-7 and never established an offensive identity. Big plays were virtually non-existent as they averaged only 224.2 yards rushing per game, well below recent standards.

This resulted in no bowl game and a lot of heat on first-year coach Tyson Summers, who fired his offensive co-coordinators; the assistants for the offensive line and wide receivers also moved on.

The new coordinator is former Georgia Tech assistant Bryan Cook, who promises an offense that will be physical and geared to the run. Cook said his quarterback will be expected to run for 100 yards and throw for 200 each game.

Redshirt freshman Shai Werts is expected to fill the quarterback position ahead of sophomore Seth Shuman.

Werts can run for the 100 yards per game, but he's suspect as a passer. Shuman can get the 200 through the air, but the 100 on the ground will be tough. Shuman completed 34 of 72 passes for 357 yards and a touchdown in five games last season. He ran for 39.

Junior running back Wesley Fields played in Matt Brieda's shadow in his first two years, but former coach Willie Fritz called Fields the best freshman running back he had ever coached. He ran for 492 yards last year. Senior fullback L.A. Ramsby is a short-yardage specialist.

DEFENSE

Pass defense is a touchy subject with the Eagles, who were sixth in the conference, allowing 229.5 yards per game. A lot of that could be attributed to one of the youngest secondaries in the country, but a veteran defensive front could register only 11 sacks, which put additional pressure on the back end.

Free safety Joshua Moon, a hard-hitting junior who had 72 tackles in 11 games, heads a more experienced, but still young, defensive backfield that also returns Jessie Liptrot and Jay Bowdry, who started as freshmen.

Chris DeLaRosa missed the last five games last year with an injury, but the senior linebacker could be one of the best in the conference if he stays healthy.

Proven depth is missing up front. Darrius Sapp and Logan Hunt will have to have big years for a defense that may have to carry the offense early in the season.

> "I'm excited about where we're headed. We continue to build leadership and continue to work on our overall team unity."
>
> — Coach Tyson Summers

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Tyler Bass has the task of replacing Younghoe Koo, who was one of the most accurate field-goal kickers in the country. Senior Matt Flynn returns to handle the punting duties.

OVERVIEW

New offensive coordinator Bryan Cook brings organization and a knowledge of how to attack more sophisticated college defenses after last season's unit failed to mesh. The Eagles open at Auburn and there is also a road game at Indiana. Georgia Southern should straddle bowl eligibility, although seven road games are an obstacle.

— Mike Brown

TOP NEWCOMER

TE/HB Ellis Richardson: The transfer from Alabama State sat out last year but had an excellent spring. The 6-3, 225-pound senior played quarterback at Alabama State, but he has great hands as a pass-catcher. He ran for 550 yards and passed for 739 in nine games in his final season at Alabama State.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	4	Shai Werts	5-11	190	Fr.
RB	21	Wesley Fields	6-0	200	Jr.
RB	1	L.A. Ramsby	5-11	200	Sr.
WR	**6**	**Myles Campbell***	**5-6**	**165**	**Sr.**
WR	**85**	**Malik Henry***	**6-0**	**175**	**Jr.**
TE	**46**	**Ross Alexander***	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
LT	53	Tommy Boynton	6-4	285	Jr.
LG	**62**	**Ryan Northrup***	**6-2**	**290**	**Jr.**
C	**58**	**Jeremiah Culbreth***	**6-4**	**320**	**Jr.**
RG	**75**	**Curtis Rainey***	**6-2**	**290**	**Jr.**
RT	**61**	**Drew Wilson***	**6-4**	**295**	**So.**

DEFENSE

DE	44	J.B. Kouassi	6-2	245	So.
DT	**90**	**Darrius Sapp***	**6-1**	**340**	**Sr.**
NT	69	Chris Washington	6-0	315	Sr.
DE	**91**	**Logan Hunt***	**6-2**	**270**	**Jr.**
LB	38	Jacorey Belvin	5-10	215	Jr.
LB	**34**	**Chris DeLaRosa***	**6-1**	**225**	**Sr.**
LB	53	Brandon Holley	6-0	205	So.
CB	**30**	**Jessie Liptrot***	**6-0**	**190**	**So.**
CB	24	Sean Freeman	6-0	190	Jr.
SS	**26**	**Jay Bowdry***	**6-0**	**200**	**So.**
FS	**22**	**Joshua Moon***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	98	Tyler Bass	5-10	175	So.
P	**55**	**Matt Flynn***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**

***Returning starters in Bold**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Auburn
Sept. 9	NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 23	at Indiana
Oct. 4	ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 14	NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 21	at Massachusetts
Oct. 28	at Troy
Nov. 4	GEORGIA STATE
Nov. 9	at Appalachian State
Nov. 18	SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 25	at Louisiana
Dec. 2	at Coastal Carolina

2016 RESULTS

W	SAVANNAH STATE	54-0
W	at South Alabama	24-9
W	ULM	23-21
L	at Western Michigan	31-49
L	at Arkansas State	26-27
L	at Georgia Tech	24-35
W	at New Mexico State	22-19
L	APPALACHIAN STATE	10-34
L	at Ole Miss	27-37
L	LOUISIANA	26-33
L	at Georgia State	24-30
W	TROY	28-24

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.6	78
Rushing	224.2	29
Passing	155.7	117
Total	379.8	T-91

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.5	52
Rushing	167.1	58
Passing	229.5	69
Total	396.6	58

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+1	+0.08	T-54

GEORGIA STATE | PANTHERS

Sun Belt rank: 8 | Record: 3-9 | Sun Belt: 2-6 (T-8th) | Stadium: Turner Field (22,000)

PANTHERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Atlanta
COACH: Shawn Elliott — At Georgia State: 1st year; overall: 1-5, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Travis Trickett
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nate Fuqua

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 2015, Cure Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 8 offense, 8 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Conner Manning, WR Penny Hart, TE Ari Werts, DE Mackendy Cheridor, LB Michael Shaw, CB Chandon Sullivan, CB Jerome Smith

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Panthers have experience at the skill positions on offense to go with a veteran line, led Aby senior Gabe Mobley, an all-conference candidate at center. Georgia State should easily boost its 19.9 scoring average of last season. Sullivan, an all-conference candidate, leads an experienced secondary.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Staying healthy has to be a concern with all the injuries the Panthers went through last year on both sides of the ball. A front seven that gave up more than 200 yards a game to opposing rushers will have at least three new starters. Kicking could be a problem.

OFFENSE

Georgia State needs a full season of health from three key players on offense. Wide receiver Penny Hart, quarterback Conner Manning and running back Kyler Neal all missed time because of injuries in 2016.

Hart, the Sun Belt Freshman of the Year in 2015, played in only two games last year before going out with a broken foot. He's an explosive receiver who tied a school single-season record with 71 receptions and a Sun Belt freshman record with 1,099 receiving yards two years ago.

Manning, a transfer from Utah, threw for a Sun Belt-high 268.4 yards per game and tied for second in the league with 16 touchdown passes despite missing two games with an arm injury.

And Neal rushed for a team-high 314 yards despite missing three full games and parts of two others. He is one of eight returning starters on offense, but he could give way to another returning starter as Glenn Smith returns to running back. Smith started at slot receiver last year.

DEFENSE

Injuries also were an issue on defense for the 2016 Panthers. End Mackendy Cheridor, nose guard Julien Laurent and cornerback Jerome Smith all missed time. Linebacker Trey Payne was suspended for the first two games.

Those four, along with linebacker Michael Shaw and defensive backs Bryan Williams and Chandon Sullivan, give first-year coordinator Nate Fuqua plenty of returning experience.

Williams' return is a big bonus. After missing all of 2013 and being limited to just three games in 2014 because of a back injury, he earned a sixth year of eligibility because of medical hardship. He was fifth on the team with 61 tackles, to go with six pass breakups and a forced fumble, last year.

Sullivan is a three-year starter and the program's career leader in interceptions with six; he will compete for All-Sun Belt honors. Shaw led the Panthers in tackles for loss with 12 in 2016. He also had an interception and forced a fumble.

CONNER MANNING
Photo by Michael Wade

"We're going to be a physical bunch. We've got to block and tackle and do the fundamentals right."
— Coach Shawn Elliott

A couple of transfers from Georgia Military could give the defense a big boost. Jalen Wade will compete for one of the two vacant linebacker spots, and DeAndre Applin will compete at safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Brandon Wright returns after averaging just 39.8 yards per attempt and making 1 of 2 field-goal attempts as a freshman. He could do double duty in 2017 unless somebody steps up. Glenn Smith is the top option on kickoff returns, and defensive back Cedric Stone was the primary punt returner as a freshman last year.

OVERVIEW

The Panthers disappointed last year after a promising 2015 season, but they could be ready for a rebound in coach Shawn Elliott's first season. Though there will be a period of adjustment to the new staff, the Panthers will run the same one-back offensive set and 3-4 defensive scheme they did under Trent Miles, which should ease the transition.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

S Deandre Applin: A transfer from Georgia Military, Applin will vie for time on defense, along with another junior college transfer from Georgia Military, linebacker Jalen Wade. Applin had 42 tackles, including three sacks, last fall. He also broke up three passes and forced and recovered a fumble.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	7	**Conner Manning***	6-1	205	Sr.
RB	17	**Glenn Smith***	6-1	200	Sr.
WR	18	Penny Hart	5-8	180	Fr.
WR	14	Devin Gentry	5-10	190	So.
WR	15	**Todd Boyd***	5-11	185	Sr.
TE	88	Ari Werts	6-4	225	Jr.
LT	76	**Hunter Atkinson***	6-5	285	So.
LG	75	Shamarious Gilmore	6-3	285	Fr.
C	72	**Gabe Mobley***	6-2	280	Jr.
RG	56	**Alex Stoehr***	6-2	299	Sr.
RT	74	**Sebastian Willer***	6-5	285	Sr.

DEFENSE

DE	95	**Marterious Allen***	6-2	270	Jr.
NG	91	**Julien Laurent***	6-4	310	Sr.
DE	5	**Mackendy Cheridor***	6-5	275	Sr.
LB	33	James Traylor	6-3	230	Sr.
LB	39	Chase Middleton	6-2	235	Jr.
LB	42	**Trey Payne***	6-0	225	Sr.
LB	44	**Michael Shaw***	6-4	230	Jr.
CB	10	**Chandon Sullivan***	5-11	195	Sr.
CB	16	**Jerome Smith***	5-10	180	Jr.
S	20	**Bryan Williams***	6-3	212	Sr.
S	21	Antreal Allen	5-11	190	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	93	Brandon Wright	5-10	180	So.
P	93	**Brandon Wright***	5-10	180	So.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	TENNESSEE STATE
Sept. 16	at Penn State
Sept. 23	at Charlotte
Sept. 30	MEMPHIS
Oct. 7	at Coastal Carolina
Oct. 14	at ULM
Oct. 21	TROY
Oct. 26	SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 4	at Georgia Southern
Nov. 11	at Texas State
Nov. 25	APPALACHIAN STATE
Dec. 2	IDAHO

2016 RESULTS

L	BALL STATE	21-31
L	at Air Force	14-48
L	at Wisconsin	17-23
L	at Appalachian State	3-17
W	TEXAS STATE	41-21
L	at Troy	21-31
W	TENNESSEE MARTIN	31-6
L	at South Alabama	10-13
L	ARKANSAS STATE	16-31
L	ULM	23-37
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	30-24
L	at Idaho	12-37

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.9	121
Rushing	87.7	126
Passing	246.3	52
Total	333.9	119

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.6	54
Rushing	206.8	95
Passing	173.9	8
Total	380.7	46

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 5	- 0.42	T-98

GEORGIA TECH | YELLOW JACKETS

ACC rank: 5 | Record: 9-4 | ACC record: 4-4 (5th, Coastal) | Stadium: Bobby Dodd Stadium (55,000)

YELLOW JACKETS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Atlanta
COACH: Paul Johnson — At Georgia Tech: 70-48, 9 years; overall: 177-87, 20 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ted Roof

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2009
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2015
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: BB Dedrick Mills, AB Clinton Lynch, WR Ricky Jeune, DE KeShun Freeman, LB Brant Mitchell, FS A.J. Gray

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Jackets have experienced playmakers at every skill position on the offensive side to help any potential quarterback. Defensively, Tech is experienced in the front four with a solid rotation and experienced in the secondary with four seniors and a junior starting.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Not having a clear starting quarterback could be an issue for an offense that requires a lot of rhythm and repetition for success. Having a new kicker and punter could lead to some special teams adventures early in the season.

OFFENSE

Georgia Tech will have a new starting quarterback in 2017 after the departure of three-year starting quarterback Justin Thomas.

The most likely candidate is junior Matthew Jordan, who backed up Thomas last season, but Jordan suffered a serious foot injury two weeks into spring ball. He is expected back for fall camp, but junior TaQuon Marshall and redshirt freshmen Lucas Johnson and Jay Jones impressed enough this spring to keep the position battle open when Jordan returns.

The quarterback will have a lot of help from sophomore B-back Dedrick Mills, who ran for a team-high 771 yards and 12 touchdowns as a freshman in just nine games. Fellow sophomores KirVonte Benson and Quaide Weimerskirch will back up Mills.

The slot back, or A-back, position has all three key players from 2016 returning. Clinton Lynch put up staggering numbers with 11.2 yards per rush and 30.6 yards per catch last season as the big-play A-back. Senior J.J. Green and Qua Searcy put up solid numbers as well, and sophomores Nate Cottrell and Omahri Jarrett help make this the deepest position on offense.

Senior Ricky Jeune could be the next NFL receiver from the Jackets' spread-option attack. He had 25 catches for 427 yards last season.

DEFENSE

Georgia Tech's defense seemed to jell late in the season as coordinator Ted Roof simplified the number of calls and schemes, allowing his unit to play faster. That idea carried over into the spring.

The Jackets have some holes to fill up front with leading sacker Pat Gamble gone. Desmond Branch will replace Gamble at the three-technique, and Antonio Simmons slides into the open strongside end spot. Kyle Cerge-Henderson returns as the nose tackle and KeShun Freeman is a fourth-year starter at rush end, giving the Jackets one of the most experienced defensive lines in the ACC.

The biggest hole defensively is replacing P.J. Davis at weakside linebacker. Victor Alexander handled that role in the spring, but incoming freshman Bruce Jordan-Swilling may push him for his job. Junior middle linebacker Brant Mitchell had a strong spring and should be the leader of that group this fall.

Playmaking twins Lance and Lawrence Austin lead a secondary that returns intact.

DEDRICK MILLS
Photo by David Rosenblum/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

> "That position is the least of my worries. All four guys, I would be comfortable with playing any of them."
> — Coach Paul Johnson, on his QB situation

SPECIAL TEAMS

For the first time in four years, the Jackets will break in a new place-kicker and punter. Georgia Tech signed one of the top punters in the country, Pressley Harvin III, and a top in-state kicker in Brenton King. Harrison Butker's clutch kicking and kickoffs will be hard for King to replicate as a freshman.

OVERVIEW

After a brutal 2015 season, Georgia Tech returned to form, competing in the ACC Coastal and knocking off three SEC East teams to hit nine wins again. The Jackets open 2017 with another SEC East foe, Tennessee, in the new Falcons stadium. A tough road slate could make nine wins a tough mark to reach, but Georgia Tech should be in the hunt for another ACC Coastal title.

— Kelly Quinlan

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Bruce Jordan-Swilling: The four-star recruit out of New Orleans is the son of Georgia Tech and College Football Hall of Famer Pat Swilling. The Jackets beat out USC and LSU to land him. Jordan-Swilling could end up starting as a true freshman at weakside linebacker.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	11	Matthew Jordan	6-2	208	Jr.
BB	26	**Dedrick Mills***	5-10	217	So.
AB	28	**J.J. Green***	5-9	188	Sr.
AB	22	**Clinton Lynch***	6-0	187	Jr.
WR	2	**Ricky Jeune***	6-3	212	Sr.
WR	83	**Brad Stewart***	6-1	197	Jr.
LT	53	Jahaziel Lee	6-2	267	So.
LG	75	**Parker Braun***	6-3	280	So.
C	55	Kenny Cooper	6-3	307	So.
RG	70	**Will Bryan***	6-4	281	Jr.
RT	50	**Andrew Marshall***	6-4	282	Sr.

DEFENSE

DE	93	Antonio Simmons	6-3	235	Sr.
NT	54	Kyle Cerge-Henderson	6-1	295	Jr.
DT	99	Desmond Branch	6-3	270	Jr.
DE	42	**KeShun Freeman***	6-2	250	Sr.
LB	9	Victor Alexander	5-10	235	Jr.
LB	51	**Brant Mitchell***	6-2	236	Jr.
CB	17	**Lance Austin***	5-10	183	Sr.
CB	8	**Step Durham***	5-11	194	Sr.
NB	20	**Lawrence Austin***	5-9	185	Sr.
SS	14	**Corey Griffin***	6-2	195	Sr.
FS	15	**A.J. Gray***	6-1	215	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	37	Brenton King	6-0	167	Fr.
P	83	Presley Harvin III	6-0	240	Fr.

*Returning starters in bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 4	vs. Tennessee (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 9	JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 16	at UCF
Sept. 23	PITTSBURGH
Sept. 30	NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 12	at Miami
Oct. 21	WAKE FOREST
Oct. 28	at Clemson
Nov. 4	at Virginia
Nov. 11	VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 18	at Duke
Nov. 25	GEORGIA

2016 RESULTS

W	vs. Boston College (Dublin, Ireland)	17-14
W	MERCER	35-10
W	VANDERBILT	38-7
L	CLEMSON	7-26
L	MIAMI	21-35
L	at Pittsburgh	34-37
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	35-24
W	DUKE	38-35
L	at North Carolina	20-48
W	at Virginia Tech	30-20
W	VIRGINIA	31-17
W	at Georgia	28-27
	TaxSlayer Bowl	
W	vs. Kentucky	33-18

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.2	70
Rushing	258.1	9
Passing	129.2	124
Total	387.2	85

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.5	39
Rushing	172.2	64
Passing	229.4	68
Total	401.6	59

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 4	+ 0.31	T-38

LOUISIANA | RAGIN' CAJUNS

Sun Belt rank: 7 | Record: 6-7 | Sun Belt record: 4-3 (5th) | Stadium: Cajun Field (41,426)

RAGIN' CAJUNS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Lafayette, La.
COACH: Mark Hudspeth — At Louisiana: 46-31, 6 years; overall: 103-52, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Will Hall
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Charlie Harbison, Mike Lucas

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2013, Sun Belt co-champ
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2015
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jordan Davis, WR Keenan Barnes, WR Ryheem Malone, DE Joe Dillon, NT Taboris Lee, S Tracy Walker

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The receiving corps has talent, depth and experience. Four starters return to the offensive line. The defensive depth looks solid up front, and the secondary is a veteran group.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Until Davis proves himself or transfer Andre Nunez steps up, quarterback will be an issue. The loss of RB Elijah McGuire hurts not only in the running game but the passing game as well. He had 29 receptions last year. Senior CB Simeon Thomas is ineligible for the first two games because of academics.

OFFENSE

It may be coming a year later than hoped for, but junior Jordan Davis looks to have earned the starting job at quarterback. Davis demonstrated poise and leadership qualities in the spring.

Davis was expected to start in 2016 after serving as Brooks Haack's backup as a redshirt freshman. But LSU transfer Anthony Jennings wrested the role away and Davis was limited to seven appearances in which he threw a total of three passes. In 2015, he passed for 256 yards in four games. He still faces a challenge from junior college transfer Andre Nunez but will go into fall camp No. 1.

A new quarterback is not the only issue for the Ragin' Cajuns. They lose running back Elijah McGuire (1,127 yards in 2016) and No. 1 receiver Al Riles (60 catches for 729 yards).

The Cajuns will start the season with a running back-by-committee approach. Senior Darius Hoggins (5.5 yards per carry in 2016) had the edge coming out of spring, but redshirt freshman Trey Ragas and sophomore Jordan Wright are in the mix.

The situation at receiver is more promising with the return Keenan Barnes (31 receptions, 418 yards) and Ja'Marcus Bradley (21-370), plus Michael Jacquet (15-206 with three starts) and SMU transfer Ryheem Malone.

DEFENSE

Despite the loss of linebackers Tremaine Lightfoot and Otha Peters, the Cajuns have a good nucleus of veterans.

In addition to returnees Joe Dillon and Taboris Lee up front, the Cajuns have two interesting prospects on the line in newcomers Terez LaGrone at end and Jamal Williams at tackle. They, at the very least, will add depth.

Dillon, defensive end Trev Miller and defensive tackle Kevon Perry, combined for 13.5 sacks last year, more than half of the team total of 25.

Senior T.J. Posey (14 tackles in 13 games last year) and redshirt freshman Tanner Holmes will step in for Lightfoot and Peters.

Louisiana had only 10 interceptions last year, but returning starter Tracy Walker had three of them. The five-man secondary returns four starters and also adds cornerback Darrell Miller Jr., who played at Navarro College in Texas last year after playing five games for Tennessee as a freshman in 2015.

KEENAN BARNES
Photo by Brad Kemp/RaginCajuns.com

"This team right now is as close as any we have had."
— Coach Mark Hudspeth

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior Stevie Artigue was 19 of 24 on field-goal attempts, with a long of 49 yards last year. The Cajuns lose punter Steven Coutts (44.1-yard average), who went back to Australia after earning his degree. Georgetown transfer Harry McCollum (41.6-yard average) and redshirt freshman Seth Kootsouradis will compete for the job.

OVERVIEW

A schedule that features seven road games with two in SEC territory (Texas A&M and Ole Miss) could make it tough for the Cajuns to get back to a bowl. But if Davis comes through at quarterback, the Cajuns have the potential on defense to make it interesting.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Ryheem Malone: A transfer from SMU, Malone gives the Cajuns a shifty receiver who can turn a short reception into a big gainer. He had 23 catches for 258 yards two years ago after starting four games for the Mustangs.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	3	Jordan Davis	6-3	205	Jr.
RB	23	Darius Hoggins	5-7	177	Sr.
WR	**21**	**Keenan Barnes***	**6-3**	**208**	**Jr.**
WR	**17**	**Ja'Marcus Bradley***	**6-1**	**195**	**So.**
WR	19	Michael Jacquet	6-2	185	So.
TE	10	Matt Barnes	6-3	233	Sr.
LT	**60**	**D'Aquin Withrow***	**6-6**	**307**	**Sr.**
LG	**50**	**Robert Hunt***	**6-5**	**328**	**So.**
C	61	Cole Prudhomme	6-3	292	So.
RG	**75**	**Kevin Dotson***	**6-4**	**309**	**So.**
RT	**72**	**Grant Horst***	**6-5**	**291**	**Sr.**

DEFENSE

DE	**3**	**Joe Dillon***	**6-3**	**215**	**So.**
NT	**92**	**Taboris Lee***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
DT	90	Kevon Perry	6-1	301	Sr.
DE	46	Jarvis Jeffries	6-3	245	Sr.
LB	44	Tanner Holmes	6-1	225	Fr.
LB	30	T.J. Posey	6-0	245	Sr.
DB	34	Denarius Howard	6-0	195	Sr.
CB	**17**	**Damar'ren Mitchell***	**5-11**	**185**	**So.**
CB	**19**	**Troy McCollum***	**6-0**	**178**	**Sr.**
SS	**23**	**Tracy Walker***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	**16**	**Travis Crawford***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	**36**	**Stevie Artigue***	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	81	Harry McCollum	6-3	190	Sr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA
Sept. 9	at Tulsa
Sept. 16	at Texas A&M
Sept. 23	ULM
Oct. 7	at Idaho
Oct. 12	TEXAS STATE
Oct. 19	at Arkansas State
Nov. 4	at South Alabama
Nov. 11	at Ole Miss
Nov. 18	NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 25	GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Dec. 2	at Appalachian State

2016 RESULTS

L	BOISE STATE	10-45
W	McNEESE STATE	30-22
W	SOUTH ALABAMA	28-23
L	at Tulane	39-41
L	at New Mexico State	31-37
L	APPALACHIAN STATE	0-24
W	at Texas State	27-3
L	IDAHO	13-23
W	at Georgia Southern	33-26
L	at Georgia	21-35
W	ARKANSAS STATE	24-19
W	at ULM	30-3
	New Orleans Bowl	
L	vs. Southern Miss	21-28

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.6	109
Rushing	178.9	59
Passing	178.2	T-106
Total	357.1	108

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.3	46
Rushing	129.2	23
Passing	249.9	90
Total	379.1	43

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+1	+ 0.08	T-58

LOUISIANA-MONROE | WARHAWKS

Sun Belt rank: 11 Record: 4-8 Sun Belt record: 3-5 (7th) Stadium: Malone Stadium (30,427)

WARHAWKS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Monroe, La.
COACH: Matt Viator — At ULM: 4-8, 1 year; overall: 82-41, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Kubik
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Collins

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2012, Independence
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 6 offense, 9 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Garrett Smith, RB Derrick Gore, WR Marcus Green, WR Xavier Brown, DE Caleb Tucker, LB David Griffith, LB Chase Day, CB J.J. Dallas

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Warhawks return a bunch of starters, but have newcomers pushing them at a couple of key spots, which should improve overall play. The running game gets a big boost with the addition of Gore. Day and Griffith could have big years at linebacker.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The pass rush needs a jolt after managing only 17 sacks in 2016. The run defense has a long, long way to go after giving up more than 260 yards per game last season. Lot of history to overcome: Since joining the Sun Belt in 2001, ULM has had one winning season.

GARRETT SMITH
Photo by Mark D. Smith-USA TODAY Sports

OFFENSE

ULM returns a wealth of players with experience, including last year's starting quarterback, the leading rusher and four offensive linemen who recorded at least five starts.

But considering that the Warhawks won only four games, the better news might be that several newcomers will be challenging for playing time this fall.

That list includes quarterback. Garrett Smith is the returning starter, but he played in only eight games before going out with an apparent knee injury that was officially described as a "lower body" injury.

Smith, who completed less than 58 percent of his passes for 154.6 yards per game, sat out the spring, giving sophomore Caleb Evans a bigger opportunity. Evans started in four of his seven appearances last season, rushing for 163 yards in addition to throwing for 834. He was sharp in the spring game, throwing for 170 yards and three touchdowns.

Junior running back Ben Luckett started eight games in 2016 and led the team in rushing with only 450 yards. He was injured in late spring and faces a big challenge from Alabama transfer Derrick Gore in the fall.

The Warhawks lose Ajalen Holley, but return three of their top four receivers, including top pass-catcher Marcus Green (36 catches, 344 yards).

Left guard Frank Sutton Jr. is an all-conference candidate up front.

DEFENSE

Nine returning starters, including all of the front six in the 4-2-5 scheme, will need to benefit from a year's experience after giving up 39 points and more than 260 rushing yards per game.

The Warhawks welcome back three of their top four tacklers in linebackers David Griffith (78 tackles), Chase Day (70) and Cortez Sisco (60). Griffith also had 12 tackles for loss and four sacks to lead the team in those categories. Day and Caleb Tucker, a returning starter at end, had two sacks each.

"Derrick Gore, we think, is going to come in and help us at tailback."
— Coach Matt Viator

Creating turnovers also were an issue last year. The Warhawks had only six interceptions to go with seven fumble recoveries.

The Warhawks added key transfers to their defense, including cornerback J.J. Dallas from Southwestern College in California and safeties Collin Turner (Cisco C.C. in Texas) and Rhoy Williams (Copiah-Lincoln C.C. in Mississippi).

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Craig Ford is 18 of 27 on field-goal attempts in two seasons, but he had two blocked last year. Of his nine misses, six have been from between 40-49 yards. Harrison Heim, a transfer from Southeastern Louisiana, likely will handle the punting. Wide receivers Marcus Green and Markis McCray are experienced returners.

OVERVIEW

Despite the number of returning starters, fall camp should feature spirited competition at several positions and that should enhance ULM's chances of notching a few wins. But a killer schedule that features seven road games — including trips to Memphis, Florida State and Auburn — works against improving to a break-even season.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Derrick Gore: Gore transferred from Alabama, where he rushed 18 times for 93 yards a touchdown last year. He blocked a punt that was turned into a touchdown and also ran for a 27-yard score in the win over Florida in the SEC title game. Gore (5-11, 210) arrived in January, but is immediately eligible.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB 13	**Garrett Smith***	6-0	211	Jr.
RB N/A	Derrick Gore	5-11	210	Jr.
WR 3	**Marcus Green***	5-8	190	Jr.
WR 17	**Xavier Brown***	6-0	186	Jr.
WR 10	D'Marius Gillespie	6-0	210	Jr.
TE N/A	Josh Pederson	6-4	210	So.
LT 79	Keaton Baggs	6-5	297	Jr.
LG 75	**Frank Sutton Jr.***	6-3	302	Sr.
C 56	Bobby Reynolds	6-2	286	So.
RG 73	**Devin Jackson Jr.***	6-4	333	So.
RT 64	**Eastwood Thomas***	6-5	304	So.

DEFENSE

DE 8	**Caleb Tucker***	6-2	231	Sr.
DT 94	**Tyler Johnson***	6-3	283	Jr.
NT 90	**Jaylen Veasley***	6-2	278	So.
DE 45	**Shaquille Warren***	6-2	246	Jr.
LB 32	**Chase Day***	6-1	216	So.
LB 14	**David Griffith***	6-0	211	Jr.
CB 1	**Juwan Offray***	6-1	174	Sr.
CB N/A	J.J. Dallas	6-1	195	Jr.
DB 9	**Marcus Hubbard***	5-9	173	Jr.
S 6	**Wesley Thompson***	6-1	193	Jr.
S N/A	Collin Turner	5-11	190	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K 16	**Craig Ford***	6-2	168	Jr.
P N/A	Harrison Heim	5-10	176	Jr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	at Memphis
Sept. 9	at Florida State
Sept. 16	SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 23	at Louisiana
Sept. 30	COASTAL CAROLINA
Oct. 7	at Texas State
Oct. 14	GEORGIA STATE
Oct. 21	at South Alabama
Oct. 28	at Idaho
Nov. 4	APPALACHIAN STATE
Nov. 18	at Auburn
Nov. 25	ARKANSAS STATE

2016 RESULTS

W	SOUTHERN	38-21
L	at Oklahoma	17-59
L	at Georgia Southern	21-23
L	at Auburn	7-58
L	IDAHO	31-34
W	TEXAS STATE	40-34
L	at New Mexico	17-59
L	at Arkansas State	10-51
W	SOUTH ALABAMA (OT)	42-35
W	at Georgia State	37-23
L	at Appalachian State	17-42
L	LOUISIANA	3-30

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.3	110
Rushing	181.3	57
Passing	192.0	99
Total	373.3	100

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.1	122
Rushing	260.3	125
Passing	220.1	55
Total	480.3	119

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 11	- 0.92	122

LOUISIANA TECH | BULLDOGS

C-USA rank: 3 Record: 9-5 C-USA record: 6-2 (1st, West) Stadium: Joe Aillet Stadium (28,019)

BULLDOGS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Ruston, La.
COACH: Skip Holtz — At Louisiana Tech: 31-22, 4 years; overall: 119-93, 17 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Fitch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Baker

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011, WAC
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2013
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB J'Mar Smith, RB Jarred Craft, WR Marlon Watts, WR Alfred Smith, OL O'Shea Dugas, DL Jaylon Ferguson, DL Deldrick Canty, K Jonathan Barnes

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Tech has the scheme to score, making stars out of last year's group. There is talent waiting in the wings at receiver, and Smith adds some run potential to a passing attack that couldn't be stopped in last year's run to the C-USA title game. Canty and Ferguson are as good a pass-rushing duo as the league has.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: OK, so the offensive system is good, but let's not pretend the C-USA MVP (QB Ryan Higgins), and Offensive/Special Teams Player of the Year (Carlos Henderson) didn't just leave town along with a handful of other all-league players. The defense is still a question mark outside what should be a good pass rush.

OFFENSE

J'Mar Smith got one start at quarterback last year. Other than that, there isn't much proven under center. One quarterback (Price Wilson) announced he would transfer after spring; another (Jon Randall Belton) moved to receiver.

Smith's potential is intriguing. He not only has shown capable arm strength for this pass-happy offense, but he adds a new run-potential wrinkle that could make what has become a proven offensive system even harder to defend.

Three returning starters on the line and the return of solid running backs Jarred Craft and Boston Scott also help the transition from quarterback Ryan Higgins, last year's C-USA MVP.

But the true test will be at receiver. Sure, there are talented wideouts on the roster (Alfred Smith, Marlon Watts, Kam McKnight and Tulane transfer Teddy Veal, to name a few). But replacing the NCAA record-holding duo of Carlos Henderson and Trent Taylor — who combined for 218 receptions, 3,338 receiving yards and 31 receiving TDs last season — is daunting, to say the least.

DEFENSE

Improving on the 116th-ranked pass defense is a must.

The Bulldogs get a good start up front with as good a pair of pass rushers as you'll find in C-USA — defensive ends Jaylon Ferguson and Deldrick Canty. Ferguson had 14.5 sacks last season. The attention they get could help the back seven, especially with a pair of starting linebackers and two defensive backs gone.

Versatile Russell Farris leads the linebacker unit after a 75-tackle season with 11 starts. But there's not much experience after him.

In the secondary, safety Secdrick Cooper, an honorable mention all-league performer, has star potential. He might not replace all the production of departed star Xavier Woods, but he's certainly capable of anchoring the unit. Other than Cooper and safety DaMarion King, a lot of playing time is still up for grabs.

JAYLON FERGUSON
Photo by Fred Kfoury III/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

"We still have a long way to go, but I really like the attitude, the energy and the way they are playing together."
— Coach Skip Holtz

SPECIAL TEAMS

The return game will miss star kick returner Carlos Henderson and punt returner Trent Taylor every bit as much as the offense will miss them as receivers. Louisiana Tech also will be breaking in a new punter, which could end up being a first-time American football player in Davan Dyer of Australia.

Two-time Lou Groza semifinalist Jonathan Barnes is back as the kicker (56 career field goals). He hit a 32-yard game-winner in December's Armed Forces Bowl win over Navy.

OVERVIEW

The system on offense isn't in question. But it's hard to imagine even the Bulldogs' fine-tuned passing attack not having some hiccups after losing a league MVP quarterback and the NCAA's all-time single-season receiving duo.

Assuming the defense steps forward, especially on that 116th-ranked pass defense that cost them a league title last season, the Bulldogs and recently extended head coach Skip Holtz seem ready to win the West and try to close the deal on the C-USA title.

— Geoff Grammer

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Teddy Veal: The 6-0 transfer from Tulane caught eight passes for 124 yards and a touchdown in the spring game, looking the part of the next star wideout for the Bulldogs. Replacing the record-setting duo of Carlos Henderson and Trent Taylor won't be easy, but Veal has a shot to fill a good chunk of that void.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	8	J'Mar Smith	6-1	222	So.
RB	3	**Jarred Craft***	**6-0**	**213**	**Sr.**
WR	21	**Alfred Smith***	**5-9**	**191**	**So.**
WR	13	Marlon Watts	6-2	185	Sr.
WR	83	Teddy Veal	6-0	192	Jr.
WR	15	Kam McKnight	6-2	222	Jr.
LT	66	Shane Carpenter	6-6	309	Jr.
LG	74	**O'Shea Dugas***	**6-5**	**329**	**Jr.**
C	65	Kody Russey	6-1	284	Fr.
RG	61	**Ethan Reed***	**6-4**	**295**	**So.**
RT	58	**Joshua Outlaw***	**6-6**	**305**	**Sr.**

DEFENSE

DE	50	**Deldrick Canty***	**6-2**	**261**	**Sr.**
DT	94	**Jordan Bradford***	**6-2**	**284**	**Jr.**
DT	91	Cedric Johnson	6-2	306	Jr.
DE	45	**Jaylon Ferguson***	**6-5**	**255**	**Jr.**
LB	31	**Russell Farris***	**5-11**	**224**	**Sr.**
LB	44	Brandon Durman	6-2	224	Jr.
LB	39	Randy Hogan	6-0	220	Jr.
CB	30	Aaron Roberson	5-9	195	Jr.
CB	37	Ephraim Kitchen	5-10	180	So.
S	2	**Secdrick Cooper***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
S	8	DaMarion King	5-11	203	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	10	**Jonathan Barnes***	**5-9**	**172**	**Sr.**
P	14	Davan Dyer	6-4	225	Fr.

***Returning starters in Bold**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 9	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 16	at Western Kentucky
Sept. 23	at South Carolina
Sept. 30	SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 7	at UAB
Oct. 21	SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 28	at Rice
Nov. 4	NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 11	FAU
Nov. 18	at UTEP
Nov. 25	UTSA

2016 RESULTS

L	at Arkansas	20-21
W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	53-24
L	at Texas Tech	45-59
L	at Middle Tennessee	34-38
W	UTEP	28-7
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	55-52
W	at Massachusetts	56-28
W	at FIU	44-24
W	RICE	61-16
W	at North Texas	45-24
W	UTSA	63-35
L	at Southern Miss	24-39
	C-USA Championship Game	
L	vs. W. Kentucky	44-58
	Armed Forces Bowl	
W	vs. Navy	48-45

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	44.3	2
Rushing	151.4	93
Passing	363.4	2
Total	514.7	9

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.6	97
Rushing	146.2	42
Passing	274.7	116
Total	420.9	71

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+1	+0.07	T-64

LOUISVILLE | CARDINALS

ACC rank: 3 Record: 9-4 ACC record: 7-1 (T-1st, Atlantic) Stadium: Papa John's Cardinal Stadium (55,000)

CARDINALS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Louisville, Ky.
COACH: Bobby Petrino — At Louisville: 67-22, 8 years; overall: 109-43, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Lonnie Galloway, Mike Summers
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Peter Sirmon

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2012, Big East, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2009
RETURNING STARTERS: 13, 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Lamar Jackson, WR Jaylen Smith, WR Dez Fitzpatrick, ATH Reggie Bonnafon, LB James Hearns, CB Jaire Alexander, LB Stacy Thomas

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Heisman Trophy winner is back at quarterback, which gives Louisville automatic credibility. There are playmakers around Jackson, albeit younger ones. The defense reloaded, too. Alexander is a potential All-American on defense.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line was as bad as it could be last season, allowing the third-highest number of sacks in the FBS and 83 tackles for loss. If Louisville didn't have the most mobile quarterback in college football, those numbers would have been far worse.

LAMAR JACKSON
Photo by Joe Robbins

OFFENSE

It almost doesn't matter that Louisville lost two starting linemen, its top running back and its three leading pass catchers.

Lamar Jackson makes up for all of that.

The Heisman Trophy winner spent his first spring since his breakout season working on his pocket presence and passing touch. The 6-3 junior completed 56.2 percent of his passes last season, throwing for 30 touchdowns against nine interceptions. Of course, his running ability (1,571 rushing yards, 21 TDs) is as good as it gets.

The biggest question, as it seems to be every year at Louisville, is the offensive line.

Lukayus McNeil, Geron Christian and Kenny Thomas are back, but how much does experience help if the experience wasn't all that great? The line struggled with penalties and assignments, too, though it's fair to note that Jackson struggled sometimes with knowing when to throw the ball away. New offensive line coach and co-offensive coordinator Mike Summers was brought in to right that ship.

Reggie Bonnafon, the former starting quarterback, can play multiple positions and be a factor on offense now that Dez Fitzpatrick has emerged as a viable receiving option alongside Jaylen Smith, Traveon Samuel and Seth Dawkins.

Jeremy Smith will have to be ready to carry the load as a bruising back to complement Jackson and Bonnafon.

DEFENSE

The front seven changes quite a bit this year, but there is plenty of talent for new coordinator Peter Sirmon.

Chris Williams showed flashes of disruptive pass-rushing last season, and he will have a larger role alongside James Hearns (eight sacks) and Drew Bailey (two sacks). Trevon Young, a redshirt senior who rang up 8.5 sacks in 2015, is healthy and back, too. The question up front is if Johnny Richardson and the other defensive tackles can take up space the way DeAngelo Brown did.

"Obviously he's a very accurate quarterback. I have to focus on my routes, because if I beat my man, I know the ball's going to be there."
— WR Dez Fitzpatrick, on Lamar Jackson

Stacy Thomas is a veteran linebacker now and will be asked to be the core of Louisville's defense in the vein of Keith Kelsey. Redshirt sophomore Amonte Caban has also emerged as a reliable linebacker.

In the secondary, Jaire Alexander, Trumaine Washington and Chucky Williams are veteran defensive backs, with talented young safeties P.J. Blue, Khane Pass, C.J. Avery and Lamarques Thomas moving into bigger roles.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jaire Alexander (10.3 per return, 1 TD) is a dynamic punt returner, and Traveon Samuel and Seth Dawkins had their moments as kick returners. Kicker Blanton Creque (16 of 19 field goal attempts, 39 of 40 PATs) and Mason King (43.8 yards per punt) are both back.

OVERVIEW

Louisville doesn't have the reliable playmakers it had last year with James Quick, Jamari Staples, Cole Hikutini and Brandon Radcliff all gone on offense, and Keith Kelsey, DeAngelo Brown and Devonte Fields gone on defense. But Jackson is back. That's good enough to make Louisville plenty dangerous, but perhaps not with the same ceiling as last season.

— Jeff Greer

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Dez Fitzpatrick: He was the second-highest-rated recruit in Louisville's 2016 signing class before redshirting. Fitzpatrick made quite a debut in the spring game, though, collecting nine catches for 176 yards and two touchdowns. He has all the tools to be a dynamic playmaker as one of Lamar Jackson's top receivers.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	8	**Lamar Jackson***	6-3	200	Jr.
RB	34	Jeremy Smith	6-2	224	Sr.
WR	9	Jaylen Smith	6-4	219	Jr.
WR	87	Dez Fitzpatrick	6-2	200	Fr.
WR	1	Traveon Samuel	5-7	170	Jr.
TE	80	Charles Standberry	6-3	243	Sr.
LT	74	**Geron Christian***	6-6	318	Jr.
LG	66	Cole Bentley	6-3	317	Fr.
C	75	Robbie Bell	6-5	300	So.
RG	79	Kenny Thomas	6-6	333	Jr.
RT	72	**Lukayus McNeil***	6-6	324	Jr.

DEFENSE

DE	14	**Drew Bailey***	6-5	289	Sr.
NT	90	Johnny Richardson	6-3	330	Sr.
DE	91	Trevon Young	6-4	255	Sr.
LB	99	**James Hearns***	6-3	249	Sr.
LB	53	Amonte Caban	6-1	254	So.
LB	32	**Stacy Thomas***	6-1	240	Sr.
LB	9	C.J. Avery	6-1	200	Fr.
CB	15	**Trumaine Washington***	5-10	181	Sr.
CB	10	**Jaire Alexander***	5-11	192	Jr.
S	11	Dee Smith	6-1	202	Jr.
S	22	**Chucky Williams***	6-2	207	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	32	**Blanton Creque***	5-11	188	Jr.
P	29	**Mason King***	6-3	213	So.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	vs. Purdue (Indianapolis, IN)
Sept. 9	at North Carolina
Sept. 16	CLEMSON
Sept. 23	KENT STATE
Sept. 30	MURRAY STATE
Oct. 5	at NC State
Oct. 14	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 21	at Florida State
Oct. 28	at Wake Forest
Nov. 11	VIRGINIA
Nov. 18	SYRACUSE
Nov. 25	at Kentucky

2016 RESULTS

W	CHARLOTTE	70-14
W	at Syracuse	62-28
W	FLORIDA STATE	63-20
W	at Marshall	59-28
L	at Clemson	36-42
W	DUKE	24-14
W	NC STATE	54-13
W	at Virginia	32-25
W	at Boston College	52-7
W	WAKE FOREST	44-12
L	at Houston	10-36
L	KENTUCKY	38-41
	Citrus Bowl	
L	vs. LSU	9-29

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	42.5	6
Rushing	242.2	13
Passing	290.5	23
Total	532.7	3

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.8	31
Rushing	115.2	12
Passing	207.1	37
Total	322.2	14

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 7	- 0.54	T-107

MEMPHIS | TIGERS

AAC rank: 5 Record: 8-5 AAC record: 5-3 (T-3rd, West) Stadium: Liberty Bowl Memorial (56,862)

TIGERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Memphis, Tenn.
COACH: Mike Norvell — At Memphis and overall: 8-5, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darrell Dickey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Ball

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2014, tri-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2013
RETURNING STARTERS: 15, 8 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Riley Ferguson, RB Doroland Dorceus, WR Anthony Miller, WR Phil Mayhue, DL Jonathan Wilson, LB Jackson Dillon, LB Genard Avery, LB Curtis Akins, S Jonathan Cook

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: As a junior college transfer, Ferguson developed quickly. He completed 63.2 percent of his passes and threw for 21 touchdowns (and only nine interceptions) in his final nine games. He should be better while leading a stocked offense. Miller has the potential to be the league's offensive Player of the Year.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Six of the team's top eight defensive backs must be replaced. Complicating matters was the mid-spring injury to cornerback Marcus Green, a junior college transfer and former Oklahoma player. He was expected to handle the league's top receivers, but the start to his season may be delayed.

RILEY FERGUSON
Photo by Justin Ford-USA TODAY Sports

"I think it's his commitment to the little things — how he finishes plays, his effort level, the film study — that stands out."
— Coach Mike Norvell, on QB Riley Ferguson's offseason improvement

OFFENSE

Eight starters return from a prolific offense that helped the Tigers to an 8-5 record and third straight bowl appearance.

Quarterback Riley Ferguson is back for his second and final season following a record-setting debut. Ferguson stepped seamlessly into former Tiger and current Denver Broncos' QB Paxton Lynch's role and passed for 3,698 yards and a school-record 32 touchdowns.

The Tigers will be loaded at running back. Fifth-year senior Doroland Dorceus returns after rushing for 810 yards and nine touchdowns. He will be joined by sophomores Tony Pollard, Patrick Taylor and Darrell Henderson. Pollard is likely to join Dorceus in the starting backfield.

Taylor (6-3, 215) is a powerful runner who averaged 5.9 yards per carry and was the team's second-leading rusher with 546 yards.

There may not be a better receiver in the conference than Anthony Miller, who'll play with a chip on his shoulder. Despite setting a school record with 1,434 receiving yards and ranking second in the AAC in yards per game (110.3), he did not earn first-team all-conference status.

Another dependable senior, Phil Mayhue, averaged 16.1 yards per reception. Newcomer Damonte Coxie, a former LSU signee, gives Ferguson another intriguing option.

DEFENSE

Safety Jonathan Cook, a former Alabama player, is the lone returning starter in the secondary. He led the team with 88 tackles and broke up eight passes. Highly regarded incoming freshman cornerback T.J. Carter might fill in quickly.

Veterans abound at linebacker. Senior Genard Avery earned first-team all-conference honors after leading the Tigers in tackles for loss (11) and sacks (five). Senior Jackson Dillon has the potential to be a dominating factor at the team's hybrid outside linebacker/defensive end spot after missing most of last season with knee problems.

Linebacker Curtis Akins moved into the starting lineup in mid-October and emerged as a force, finishing fourth on the team with 74 tackles.

Defensive linemen had only 11 of the team's 23 sacks. Ernest Suttles and Jonathan Wilson, the team's best lineman in 2016, are returning starters.

SPECIAL TEAMS

After four stellar seasons from Jake Elliott, freshman Riley Patterson takes over at kicker. Where this unit may prosper is behind Tony Pollard, a freshman All-American a year ago. Pollard led the AAC in kickoff-return average (28.1 yards) and returned two kickoffs for touchdowns. Pollard also blocked a punt.

OVERVIEW

Coach Mike Norvell had a remarkable debut by keeping the program's bowl streak intact. He has the talent, especially on offense, to challenge for the AAC title. Most of the key weapons are back from an offense that averaged 38.8 points, including a polished quarterback and a receiver with All-America potential. How quickly a depleted secondary rebuilds could determine how successful Norvell's second season plays out.

— Phil Stukenborg

TOP NEWCOMER

LT Harneet Gill: The transfer from Butler Community College enrolled at Missouri out of high school, but spent only three days in Mizzou's camp. Gill sat out last season, but he secured the starting left tackle job in the spring, moving last year's starter, Trevon Tate, to right tackle.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	4	**Riley Ferguson***	6-4	210	Sr.
RB	28	Doroland Dorceus	5-10	215	Sr.
RB	1	**Tony Pollard***	5-11	200	So.
WR	3	**Anthony Miller***	5-11	190	Sr.
WR	89	**Phil Mayhue***	6-3	210	Sr.
WR	18	Roderick Proctor	5-11	175	Sr.
LT	70	Harneet Gill	6-7	265	Jr.
LG	53	**Dustin Woodard***	6-2	285	So.
C	54	**Drew Kyser***	6-5	300	Jr.
RG	71	**Gabe Kuhn***	6-4	295	Sr.
RT	72	**Trevon Tate***	6-4	280	Jr.

DEFENSE

DE	48	**Ernest Suttles***	6-5	265	Sr.
NT	97	Emmanuel Cooper	6-1	275	Jr.
DT	38	**Jonathan Wilson***	6-3	265	So.
KAT	34	Jackson Dillon	6-6	245	Sr.
LB	7	**Curtis Akins***	6-2	230	Jr.
LB	6	**Genard Avery***	6-1	255	Sr.
STAR	25	**Austin Hall***	6-2	205	So.
CB	21	Marcus Green	6-2	190	Jr.
CB	24	Tito Windham	5-9	180	Jr.
SS	19	Shaun Rupert	6-1	195	Sr.
FS	14	**Jonathan Cook***	6-0	198	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	N/A	Riley Patterson	5-11	180	Fr.
P	17	**Spencer Smith***	6-1	195	Sr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	ULM
Sept. 9	at UCF
Sept. 16	UCLA
Sept. 23	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 30	at Georgia State
Oct. 6	at Connecticut
Oct. 14	NAVY
Oct. 19	at Houston
Oct. 27	TULANE
Nov. 3	at Tulsa
Nov. 18	SMU
Nov. 25	EAST CAROLINA

2016 RESULTS

W	S.E. MISSOURI STATE	35-17
W	KANSAS	43-7
W	BOWLING GREEN	77-3
L	at Ole Miss	28-48
W	TEMPLE	34-27
W	at Tulane	24-14
L	at Navy	28-42
L	TULSA	30-59
W	at SMU	51-7
L	SOUTH FLORIDA	42-49
W	at Cincinnati	34-7
W	HOUSTON	48-44
	Boca Raton Bowl	
L	vs. Western Kentucky	31-51

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	38.8	15
Rushing	159.3	84
Passing	304.4	14
Total	463.7	28

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.8	T-68
Rushing	204.9	93
Passing	249.7	89
Total	454.6	106

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 8	+ 0.62	T-18

MIAMI | HURRICANES

ACC rank: 4 Record: 9-4 ACC record: 5-3 (T-2nd, Coastal) Stadium: Hard Rock Stadium (64,982)

HURRICANES at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Coral Gables, Fla.
COACH: Mark Richt — At Miami: 9-4, 1 year; overall: 154-55, 16 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Thomas Brown
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Manny Diaz

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003, Big East co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2012
RETURNING STARTERS: 15, 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Mark Walton, WR Ahmmon Richards, WR/PR Braxton Berrios, C Nick Linder, OG Kc McDermott, DE Chad Thomas, LB Shaquille Quarterman, CB Malek Young

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A strong offensive line will make life easier for the new quarterback to adjust, and there is a strong supporting cast at the skill positions. The defense will be stout. There is a lot of talented young players on this team, and Richt is bringing in more, reigniting buzz around the program.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Quarterbacks Malik Rosier, Evan Shirreffs, Jack Allison and Cade Weldon didn't separate from the pack in the spring, which was to be expected, Richt said. Stay tuned in the fall, when four-star recruit N'Kosi Perry, a dual-threat QB, could come in and take the job. Depth is short at running back and on the offensive line.

MARK WALTON
Photo by Steve Mitchell-USA TODAY Sports

OFFENSE

Miami has one of the top running backs in the country, an offensive line with more than 100 starts and a wide receiver who earned freshman All-American honors last season.

But no quarterback established himself as the No. 1 guy after spring ball. That's the one position that could be the difference between the Hurricanes winning or not winning the ACC Coastal Division. Quarterback Brad Kaaya's choice to leave early for the NFL might have kept Miami from being in the preseason top 10.

Malik Rosier, who has made one career start, goes into the summer as co-leader with redshirt sophomore Evan Shirreffs. Incoming freshman N'Kosi Perry could push to start. The 6-3, 170-pounder is a four-star, dual-threat quarterback out of Ocala.

Guard Kc McDermott and his 21 straight starts anchor the offensive line, which also includes center Nick Linder. The line will need to keep opening holes for tailback Mark Walton to take pressure off the new quarterback. Walton will get all the work he wants after rushing for 1,117 yards and 15 touchdowns in 2016.

The other star on offense is wide receiver Ahmmon Richards, who led NCAA freshman with a 19.1-yard average and had 934 yards receiving.

DEFENSE

Under the direction of two former SEC coaching veterans — defensive coordinator Manny Diaz (Mississippi State) and defensive line coach Craig Kuligowski (Missouri) — Miami made huge improvements in 2016.

Miami ranked in the top 33 in eight defensive categories, including No. 5 in tackles for loss (108), No. 9 in yards allowed per play (4.75), No. 12 in scoring defense (18.5 points per game) and No. 20 in total defense (345.5 yards per game).

The Hurricanes did this despite starting three freshmen at linebacker. Two of them, Shaquille Quarterman and Michael Pinckney, earned Freshman All-American honors, as did defensive end Joe Jackson.

> "The more we coached them, the worse they got, right? Eventually, they will overcome our coaching and finally start to relax and play better."
>
> — DC Manny Diaz

Miami returns 11 defenders who started four or more games.

Senior defensive end Chad Thomas, a former five-star recruit, is poised to star. Sophomore cornerback Malek Young has impressed with his playmaking.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Mike Badgley made 21 of 26 field-goal attempts last season, with better accuracy from distance. He was 9 of 9 from between 40 and 49 yards, going 1 of 2 from even longer. The Hurricanes must break in a new punter. Miami is making big plays again on special teams; it blocked five kicks and returned a punt for a touchdown last season.

OVERVIEW

Richt had a great first season, and now he returns a veteran group looking for more. A quarterback establishing himself early is key because Miami's third game is at Florida State on Sept. 16. There's also a tough three-game stretch at North Carolina (Oct. 28), followed by home games with Virginia Tech (Nov. 4) and Notre Dame (Nov. 11). Another 9-4 season is doable. Perhaps better, if the QB play is solid.

— Craig Handel

TOP NEWCOMER

WR DeeJay Dallas: The four-star recruit was one of 10 newcomers who arrived for spring ball — also watch for S Amari Carter, among others — and is a terrific athlete who could end up as a returner, a running back or even a defensive back down the road. He impressed this spring with his pass-catching.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	12	Malik Rosier	6-1	216	Jr.
TB	1	**Mark Walton***	5-9	205	Jr.
WR	82	**Ahmmon Richards***	6-1	190	So.
WR	84	Dionte Mullins	5-10	200	So.
WR	8	Braxton Berrios	5-9	186	Sr.
TE	23	**Christopher Herndon IV***	6-4	252	Sr.
RT	78	**Tyree St. Louis***	6-5	305	Jr.
RG	55	Navaughn Donaldson	6-6	350	Fr.
C	68	**Nick Linder***	6-3	298	Sr.
LG	73	**Trevor Darling***	6-4	300	Sr.
LT	52	**Kc McDermott***	6-7	300	Sr.

DEFENSE

DE	9	**Chad Thomas***	6-6	275	Sr.
DT	80	**R.J. McIntosh***	6-4	293	Jr.
DT	7	**Kendrick Norton***	6-3	312	Jr.
DE	33	**Trent Harris***	6-2	248	Sr.
LB	53	**Zach McCloud***	6-3	230	So.
LB	55	**Shaquille Quarterman***	6-1	240	So.
LB	56	**Michael Pinckney***	6-1	228	So.
CB	28	Michael Jackson	6-1	200	Jr.
CB	12	Malek Young	5-9	180	So.
SS	4	Jaquan Johnson	5-11	190	Jr.
FS	22	Sheldrick Redwine	6-1	195	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	**Michael Badgley***	5-10	178	Sr.
P	43	Jack Spicer	6-3	210	So.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	BETHUNE-COOKMAN
Sept. 9	at Arkansas State
Sept. 16	at Florida State
Sept. 23	TOLEDO
Sept. 29	at Duke
Oct. 12	GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 21	SYRACUSE
Oct. 28	at North Carolina
Nov. 4	VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 11	NOTRE DAME
Nov. 18	VIRGINIA
Nov. 24	at Pittsburgh

2016 RESULTS

W	FLORIDA A&M	70-3
W	FAU	38-10
W	at Appalachian State	45-10
W	at Georgia Tech	35-21
L	FLORIDA STATE	19-20
L	NORTH CAROLINA	13-20
L	at Virginia Tech	16-37
L	at Notre Dame	27-30
W	PITTSBURGH	51-28
W	at Virginia	34-14
W	at NC State	27-13
W	DUKE	40-21
	Russell Athletic Bowl	
W	vs. West Virginia	31-14

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.3	37
Rushing	151.8	93
Passing	274.2	27
Total	425.9	57

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.5	12
Rushing	131.8	26
Passing	213.8	47
Total	345.5	20

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+9	+0.69	T-14

MIDDLE TENNESSEE | BLUE RAIDERS

C-USA rank: 2 Record: 8-5 C-USA Record: 5-3 (3rd, East) Stadium: Floyd Stadium (30,788)

BLUE RAIDERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Murfreesboro, Tenn.
COACH: Rick Stockstill — At MTSU and overall: 72-66, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Franklin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scott Shafer

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006, Sun Belt co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2014
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Brent Stockstill, RB Shane Tucker, WR Richie James, WR Ty Lee, DE Walter Brady, LB Chris Melton, LB D.J. Sanders, CB Mike Minter

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Stockstill is one of the top quarterbacks in the conference and has a deep stable of wide receivers as targets, led by all-conference pick James. Brady will give the defense a big boost with his pass-rushing ability. Linebacker and the secondary are veteran units.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: I'Tavius Mathers is gone after becoming the program's first running back to rush for more than 1,500 yards. The offensive line will have three new faces. Even through the addition of Brady is a big plus, the defensive line must replace four starters.

RICHIE JAMES
Photo by Marco Garcia-USA TODAY Sports

OFFENSE

Middle Tennessee State's passing game should flourish. The Blue Raiders return third-year starting quarterback Brent Stockstill and all-conference receiver Richie James, who made 105 receptions for 1,625 yards and 12 touchdowns last season.

Returning starters Ty Lee (63-699) and Patrick Smith (28-332) join James at wide receiver, and sophomores Isiah Upton and C.J. Windham also saw significant time, making receiver a deep position.

Stockstill had an outstanding sophomore campaign, completing 63.3 percent of his passes for 323.3 yards per game, with 31 touchdowns against only seven interceptions.

But only two starters return up front, and the Blue Raiders lose the league's third-leading rusher, as I'Tavius Mathers (1,561 yards) exhausted his eligibility.

Maurice Gordon, a transfer from Navarro College in Texas, was favored to succeed Mathers going into spring, but he was limited by injuries. Last year's backup, Terelle West, also had to deal with injuries, opening the way for former wideouts Shane Tucker and Desmond Anderson to work their way into the picture.

The offensive line returns an all-conference candidate in guard Chandler Brewer and starting tackle Carlos Johnson, but must replace second-team All-C-USA pick Daniel Stephens.

DEFENSE

Six starters return to Middle Tennessee's defense for new coordinator Scott Shafer, but the Blue Raiders lose their top five defensive linemen and won't have as much size. The hope is that a more aggressive style will pay dividends.

Two players — Tyshun Render and tackle Malik Manciel — have some experience, and the Raiders add one of the top freshmen in the country from 2015 in transfer Walter Brady. The defensive end had seven sacks for Missouri two years ago before transferring.

Expectations are high for the linebackers. Junior Chris Melton, the team's leading tackler (102 stops), is one of four 'backers who have started at least seven games. The others are seniors D.J. Sanders (66 tackles) and Myles Harges (47) and junior Darius Harris (74).

"If you look at the running backs we have, this summer will be critical for all of them."

— Coach Rick Stockstill

The secondary is also stocked with starting experience. The list includes corner Mike Minter (two interceptions), safety Jovante Moffatt (76 tackles) and safety Alex Dale (61 tackles). Junior safety Darryl Randolph started the final six games as well.

Senior Charvarius Ward (two interceptions) looks to fill the vacant corner spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior kicker Canon Rooker earned first-team all-conference recognition after converting 16 of 19 field goal attempts last year. Punter Matt Bonadies is a returning starter but averaged 38.8 yards an attempt as a sophomore after averaging 41.3 as a freshman. Richie James has breakaway potential as a punt returner.

OVERVIEW

To truly contend in C-USA, the Blue Raiders are going to have to be able to stop the run, and that means rebuilding their defensive front. They have one of the top passing combos around in Stockstill-to-James, and that will easily get them to a bowl again.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Walter Brady: Brady sat out last season after transferring from Missouri, where he recorded seven sacks, most by an FBS freshman in 2015. He had 5.5 other tackles for loss for a total of 12.5, leading all SEC freshmen in the category. He will be a key performer as the Blue Raiders rebuild their defensive front.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	12	**Brent Stockstill***	6-0	223	Jr.
RB	1	Shane Tucker	6-0	218	Sr.
WR	3	**Richie James***	5-9	178	Jr.
WR	24	**Ty Lee***	5-9	160	So.
WR	37	**Patrick Smith***	6-0	179	Sr.
WR	9	Isiah Upton	6-0	178	So.
LT	70	Conner Trent	6-5	312	Sr.
LG	71	Angelo Owens	6-4	293	Jr.
C	74	Robert Behanan	6-3	297	Jr.
RG	73	**Chandler Brewer***	6-6	313	Jr.
RT	55	**Carlos Johnson***	6-3	332	Jr.

DEFENSE

DE	90	Walter Brady	6-3	268	Jr.
DT	92	Ty Nix	6-0	282	Fr.
DT	93	Malik Manciel	6-3	259	So.
DE	94	Tyshun Render	6-4	249	So.
LB	31	**D.J. Sanders***	6-0	230	Sr.
LB	30	**Darius Harris***	6-2	220	Jr.
LB	32	**Chris Melton***	6-1	207	Jr.
CB	6	**Mike Minter***	6-0	177	Sr.
CB	2	Charvarius Ward	6-1	192	Sr.
SS	7	**Jovante Moffatt***	6-0	200	Jr.
FS	22	**Alex Dale***	5-10	212	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	15	**Canon Rooker***	5-11	189	Sr.
P	99	**Matt Bonadies***	6-1	199	Jr.

***Returning starters in Bold**

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	VANDERBILT
Sept. 9	at Syracuse
Sept. 16	at Minnesota
Sept. 23	BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 30	at FAU
Oct. 7	FIU
Oct. 14	at UAB
Oct. 20	MARSHALL
Nov. 4	UTEP
Nov. 11	at Charlotte
Nov. 17	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 25	OLD DOMINION

2016 RESULTS

W	ALABAMA A&M	55-0
L	at Vanderbilt	24-47
W	at Bowling Green	41-21
W	LOUISIANA TECH	38-34
W	at North Texas	30-13
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY (2OT)	43-44
W	at Missouri	51-45
W	at FIU	42-35
L	UTSA	25-45
L	at Marshall	17-42
W	at Charlotte	38-31
W	FAU	77-56
	Hawaii Bowl	
L	vs. Hawaii	35-52

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.7	12
Rushing	191.8	48
Passing	325.8	8
Total	517.7	8

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.8	109
Rushing	198.7	85
Passing	250.8	95
Total	449.5	96

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 2	- 0.15	T-78

SOUTH ALABAMA | JAGUARS

Sun Belt rank: 5 Record: 6-7 Sun Belt record: 2-6 (T-8th) Stadium: Ladd-Peebles Stadium (33,471)

JAGUARS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Mobile, Ala.
COACH: Joey Jones — At South Alabama: 48-42, 8 years; overall: 51-49, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryant Vincent
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kane Wommack

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2015
RETURNING STARTERS: 12, 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Dallas Davis, RB Xavier Johnson, RB Tywun Walters, TE Maaseiah Francis, OL Tyler Grimsley, DE Jimmie Gipson III, CB Jalen Thompson, FS Jeremy Reaves

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Depth along the defensive front and at linebacker will be a plus. LB Riley Cole is back from injury; Missouri transfer Rocel McWilliams could add strength up front. The secondary is solid in the first unit. The offense has the potential to score points, and a healthy Davis should lead to marked improvement.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line, while better overall in terms of talent, must play better and stay healthy. Injuries led to spotty play last season, when the running game wasn't as effective as needed. The defensive front, while deep, must play as a unit and limit the running success of opponents.

DALLAS DAVIS
Photo by Chris Coduto/Icon Sportswire via AP Images

OFFENSE

Starting quarterback Dallas Davis, who missed all of spring practice recovering from shoulder surgery, threw for more than 2,700 yards last season, but he was picked off 12 times and threw just 11 touchdown passes. Those numbers must get better. Cole Garvin returns as the backup, with Evan Orth also available.

The offensive line is better. The running game suffered last season, so the emphasis of spring drills centered on improving that aspect of the attack. Miami transfer Tyler Grimsley should help, projected to start at left guard.

Running back Xavier Johnson has big-play potential, and junior college standout Tywun Walters is expected to give the Jags a big-back presence as well.

Offensive coordinator Bryant Vincent will be missing the top four receivers (in terms of receiving yards) from a year ago. While there is talent at the receiver position, it is mostly young and untested.

DEFENSE

This should be South Alabama's strength. Defensive coordinator Kane Wommack, entering his second season, has found success in the 4-2-5 alignment, and he'll have plenty of depth this season. He is armed with newcomers who sat out a year ago, others returning from injury and younger players who picked up valuable game experience filling in for those who missed time with injuries.

There is reason for optimism with players such as defensive end Finesse Middleton, nose tackle Tre Alford and the return of end Jimmie Gipson III, who missed last year with an injury. Several players along the defensive front suffered season-ending injuries before the first game of last season.

Nose tackle Zach Befort, linebacker Bull Barge, end Sean Grayer and end Chason Milner all started at times last year, although the improved depth means they aren't expected to be in the starting lineup when 2017 opens.

The secondary is strong with Jeremy Reaves, Neiko Robinson, Jalen Thompson, Bobby Flott and Malcolm Buggs expected in the starting lineup. The Jaguars ranked No. 2 in the league in pass defense a year ago.

> "Our physicality has been the biggest stride we've made. Overall, I think our guys are bigger and stronger up front."
> — Coach Joey Jones, on both sides of the line

SPECIAL TEAMS

Corliss Waitman takes over punting duties from the graduated Brandon McKee, who was solid last season. Waitman has demonstrated the ability to produce big, booming punts in the past, but consistency is needed. Gavin Patterson returns after making 10 of 16 field-goal attempts last season, but accuracy from deep is needed. He was 1 of 6 from 40-plus yards.

OVERVIEW

The difficult 1-2 punch of Ole Miss and Oklahoma State to start the season will test the Jags right away. Last year, they pulled off an upset of Mississippi State on the road in the season opener. They also beat Top 25 team San Diego State last year. The problem was winning other games.

There is more overall talent this year, but can the Jags produce on a weekly basis, not just for bigger games? It's a program that should be doing better than finishing with two league wins, as was the case last season.

— Tommy Hicks

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Tywun Walters: He has the chance to make an immediate impact with the Jags, who didn't have an inside runner who could consistently move the ball last year. The 5-11, 215-pounder from Northwest Mississippi Community College will combine with the big-play potential of RB Xavier Johnson to form a strong 1-2 punch at the position.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	11	Dallas Davis*	6-2	215	Jr.
RB	28	Xavier Johnson*	5-11	185	Sr.
WR	7	Quinton Lane	6-1	190	Sr.
WR	18	Jordan McCray	6-5	185	So.
WR	17	Sa'Mory Collier	5-11	180	Sr.
TE	85	Maaseiah Francis	6-3	205	Jr.
LT	57	Noah Fisher*	6-4	305	Jr.
LG	69	Tyler Grimsley	6-0	290	Jr.
C	75	Harrison Louden*	6-4	290	Sr.
RG	76	Dominic Esposito*	6-2	305	Sr.
RT	64	Ryan Alexander	6-3	300	So.

DEFENSE

DE	40	Jimmie Gipson III	6-0	260	Sr.
NT	78	Tre Alford	5-10	280	Sr.
DT	12	Tyree Turner*	6-1	295	So.
DE	10	Finesse Middleton	6-1	250	Sr.
LB	33	Riley Cole	6-3	230	So.
LB	32	Darrell Songy*	6-1	235	Sr.
CB	2	Jalen Thompson	6-0	170	Jr.
CB	15	Bobby Flott	6-1	180	So.
S	14	Neiko Robinson*	6-0	175	Sr.
S	9	Malcolm Buggs	5-9	200	Jr.
FS	1	Jeremy Reaves*	5-11	190	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	89	Gavin Patterson*	5-7	200	Jr.
P	87	Corliss Waitman	6-2	190	Jr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Mississippi
Sept. 9	OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 16	ALABAMA A&M
Sept. 23	IDAHO
Sept. 30	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 11	at Troy
Oct. 21	ULM
Oct. 26	at Georgia State
Nov. 4	LOUISIANA
Nov. 11	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 18	at Georgia Southern
Dec. 2	at New Mexico State

2016 RESULTS

W	at Mississippi State	21-20
L	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	9-24
L	at Louisiana	23-28
W	NICHOLLS STATE (OT)	41-40
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	42-24
L	at Arkansas State	7-17
L	TROY	21-28
W	GEORGIA STATE	13-10
L	at ULM (OT)	35-42
W	PRESBYTERIAN	31-7
L	at Idaho	31-38
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	35-28
	Arizona Bowl	
L	vs. Air Force	21-45

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.4	92
Rushing	145.6	102
Passing	243.8	56
Total	389.4	82

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.0	56
Rushing	215.2	100
Passing	174.6	9
Total	389.8	53

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 2	- 0.15	T-78

SOUTH FLORIDA | BULLS

AAC rank: 1 Record: 11-2 AAC Record: 7-1 (T-1st, East) Stadium: Raymond James (65,857)

BULLS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Tampa, Fla.
COACH: Charlie Strong — At USF: 1st year; overall: 53-37, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sterlin Gilbert
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Jean-Mary

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2014
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 7 offense, 9 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Quinton Flowers, RB D'Ernest Johnson, WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling, WR Tyre McCants, DT Deadrin Senat, DT Bruce Hector, LB Auggie Sanchez, CB Deatrick Nichols

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Flowers was the AAC Offensive Player of the Year in 2016 and should thrive as USF accentuates a faster pace in 2017. Johnson rushed for 543 yards in a backup role and was No. 2 in receiving with 28 catches. The defense is equally experienced and has legitimate All-AAC candidates in Senat, Sanchez and Nichols.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There are a couple of holes to fill up front on offense with the key one at left tackle. You can't lose a 1,100-yard rusher like Marlon Mack and not feel it, though Johnson and senior Darius Tice have experience. Someone (Valdes-Scantling?) needs to step up as the No. 1 receiver with Rodney Adams gone. The defense overall has to up its performance.

QUINTON FLOWERS
Photo by Michael Wade

OFFENSE

USF had the AAC's highest-scoring offense and was No. 2 in total offense last year. With seven starters returning, including quarterback Quinton Flowers, the chances of duplicating that production look good for first-year coach Charlie Strong.

Despite the presence last year of standout running back Marlon Mack, who left early to the NFL, Flowers was the Bulls' leading rusher with 1,530 yards while completing 62.5 percent of his passes for another 2,812.

The rushing total and his 4,342 yards of total offense were school records and earned him Offensive Player of the Year honors in the conference.

He no longer has 2016's leading receiver, Rodney Adams, but senior running backs D'Ernest Johnson (1,000 career rushing yards) and Darius Tice (843) form a potent one-two punch as the Bulls look to increase their tempo. And redshirt freshman Elijah Mack (not related to Marlon) put in a bid in the spring for a spot in the backfield rotation.

Junior Tyre McCants (25 catches, 384 yards) and senior Marquez Valdes-Scantling (22-415) are a nice pair of targets, and the tight end tandem of Mitchell Wilcox and Elkanah Dillon may be the best in the AAC.

DEFENSE

Strong is known for his 3-3-5 defensive scheme, but the unit this spring was about 50-50 between that and the 4-2-5 look USF employed last season.

That could be altered when sophomore defensive end Kirk Livingstone, a returning starter, gets into fall camp. He sat out the spring with a shoulder injury.

Whatever the scheme, it's a veteran group with nine returning starters, plus safety Devin Abraham, who started five games before breaking his thumb. This is a unit, however, that ranked last in the AAC in total defense and 10th in the 12-team conference in scoring defense.

The Bulls have a trio of second-team all-conference returnees in tackle Deadrin Senat, cornerback Deatrick Nichols and linebacker Auggie Sanchez. Sanchez, who has 37 career starts, led the team in tackles with 120. He and tackle Bruce Hector, who also returns, tied for the team lead in sacks with six.

Despite the loss of safety Nate Godwin, a four-year starter, and dismissal of backup safety Hassan Childs (shot in a road rage incident), the secondary is in good hands.

"We know we lost some really good players, but we can replace them."
— Coach Charlie Strong

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Emilio Nadelman made all seven of his field-goal attempts before missing the last four games due to a leg injury. Punter Jon Hernandez, a walk-on transfer from Florida State who averaged 41.2 yards on 63 attempts, also returns. D'Ernest Johnson was second-team All-AAC as a return specialist on kicks and punts.

OVERVIEW

The Bulls are primed for a big run in Strong's inaugural season with 18 starters back from the team that shared the AAC's East Division title with Temple last year. The schedule also looks more favorable (no Florida State). If the defense improves any at all, look for double-digit wins and a potential big bowl.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Andre Polk Jr.: Polk arrived as a four-star prospect out of South Fort Myers (Fla.) High, where he played safety. He had 54 tackles, including a sack, in 2015 despite missing several games to injury during his senior high school season. At 6-4, 227, he should fit right in at the linebacker spot vacated by Nigel Harris.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	9	**Quinton Flowers***	6-0	210	Sr.
RB	2	D'Ernest Johnson	5-10	208	Sr.
WR	8	**Tyre McCants***	5-11	219	Jr.
WR	1	Chris Barr	5-10	175	Jr.
WR	11	**Marquez Valdes-Scantling***	6-5	207	Sr.
TE	89	**Mitchell Wilcox***	6-4	248	So.
LT	55	Eric Mayes	6-4	287	Jr.
LG	73	**Jeremi Hall***	6-5	332	Sr.
C	74	**Cameron Ruff***	6-3	320	Sr.
RG	72	Brooks Larkin	6-3	315	So.
RT	77	**Marcus Norman***	6-6	305	So.

DEFENSE

DE	94	**Kirk Livingstone***	6-4	266	So.
DT	60	**Bruce Hector***	6-2	296	Sr.
DT	10	**Deadrin Senat***	6-1	305	Sr.
DE	98	**Mike Love***	6-4	266	Sr.
LB	43	**Auggie Sanchez***	6-2	245	Sr.
LB	12	Andre Polk Jr.	6-4	227	Fr.
DB	21	**Khalid McGee***	5-10	198	Jr.
CB	3	**Deatrick Nichols***	5-10	189	Sr.
CB	19	**Ronnie Hoggins***	5-8	175	Jr.
SS	20	Devin Abraham	5-9	189	Sr.
FS	13	**Tajee Fullwood***	6-2	210	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	35	**Emilio Nadelman***	5-6	173	Sr.
P	44	**Jon Hernandez***	6-4	241	Sr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26	at San Jose State
Sept. 2	STONY BROOK
Sept. 9	at Connecticut
Sept. 15	ILLINOIS
Sept. 21	TEMPLE
Sept. 30	at East Carolina
Oct. 14	MASSACHUSETTS
Oct. 21	at Tulane
Oct. 28	CINCINNATI
Nov. 04	HOUSTON
Nov. 18	TULSA
Nov. 24	at UCF

2016 RESULTS

W	TOWSON	56-20
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	48-17
W	at Syracuse	45-20
L	FLORIDA STATE	35-55
W	at Cincinnati	45-20
W	EAST CAROLINA	38-22
W	CONNECTICUT	42-27
L	at Temple	30-46
W	NAVY	52-45
W	at Memphis	49-42
W	at SMU	35-27
W	UCF	48-31
	Birmingham Bowl	
W	vs. South Carolina (OT)	46-39

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	43.8	4
Rushing	285.3	5
Passing	226.2	70
Total	511.5	11

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.6	92
Rushing	196.5	84
Passing	285.5	122
Total	482.0	120

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 9	+ 0.69	T-14

SOUTHERN MISS | GOLDEN EAGLES

C-USA rank: 4 Record: 7-6 C-USA record: 4-4 (3rd, West) Stadium: M.M. Roberts Stadium (36,000)

GOLDEN EAGLES at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Hattiesburg, Miss.
COACH: Jay Hopson — At Southern Miss: 7-6, 1 year; overall: 39-23, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shannon Dawson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Pecoraro

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2014
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 5 offense, 3 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Ito Smith, WR Allenzae Staggers, RT Ty Pollard, CB Cornell Armstrong, S Picasso Nelson Jr.

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Southern Miss is expected to lean on the ground game in 2017, and for good reason. Smith is as good as there is among all Group of Five running backs. On top of that, there is quality depth behind him in Tez Parks and George Payne. The receiving corps features a good mix of experienced and young talent.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The quarterback situation likely will create uncertainty into the season, and the defense must do a fair amount of retooling. Southern Miss can't rely on winning shootouts all the time; the Eagles allowed at least 37 points in five of six losses last season.

OFFENSE

Southern Miss loses one of the surest things on offense in Conference USA, but the skill positions will be the Golden Eagles' biggest overall strength.

Durable senior running back Ito Smith rocketed his way up the school's career lists for yardage and touchdowns last season, rushing 265 times for 1,459 yards and 17 touchdowns. Smith won't catch the school's all-time leading rusher (Damion Fletcher), but should get to No. 2 on the list well before the midway point of the season.

Coordinator Shannon Dawson's offense struggled with consistency in 2016. That won't be easy to solve, given the graduation of quarterback Nick Mullens, the school's all-time leading passer.

In line to replace Mullens is sophomore Keon Howard or redshirt junior Kwadra Griggs. Neither distinguished himself as the clear-cut frontrunner in spring camp.

The quarterbacks' best target will be wide receiver Allenzae Staggers, who made 63 catches for 1,165 yards and seven scores last season. Smith helps here, too, snagging 43 passes last season.

The Golden Eagles lost a lot along the offensive line. Devin Farrior and Jerry Harris are the most experienced linemen, although the coaching staff is not afraid to lean on talented youngsters such as Ty Pollard and Drake Dorbeck.

DEFENSE

The Southern Miss defense did not live up to expectations in year one under new coach Jay Hopson, who has spent the majority of his coaching career on that side of the ball. The Golden Eagles gave up only 324.8 yards per game, but the team allowed 29.5 points per game.

The biggest challenge for Hopson's team in 2017 will be on defense. It lost all-conference performers such as Dylan Bradley, Elijah Parker and D'Nerius Antoine, as well as a number of significant contributors like Devonta Foster and Ja'Boree Poole.

The biggest question marks will be at linebacker and safety. Although veterans like Picasso Nelson Jr. (safety) and Sherrod Ruff (linebacker) will be back to ease the pain, the number of new pieces to those puzzles could make for some uneasiness early.

ITO SMITH
Photo by Chuck Cook-USA TODAY Sports

"Quarterback is such a complicated position. You just want to be able to run the offense efficiently and effectively." — Coach Jay Hopson

There is some tried-and-true talent, most notably at cornerback (Cornell Armstrong, Trae Collins and Curtis Mikell) and defensive line (LaDarius Harris, Darian Yancey and Draper Riley).

SPECIAL TEAMS

Place-kicker Parker Shaunfield was a bright spot last season, making 12 of 14 field goal attempts, with a long of 49. The Golden Eagles will be looking for a punter to replace Tyler Sarrazin. The rest of special teams needs work, too. Southern Miss was 118th nationally in kickoff returns and 96th in kickoff coverage last season.

OVERVIEW

A lot will obviously depend on the performance of a new quarterback — whether it's Howard or Griggs. If they play well, Southern Miss has a good chance at making a run toward the Conference USA West Division title. If not, the Golden Eagles are likely looking at another season hovering around the .500 mark — or worse.

— Jason Munz

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Trevor Terry: A mid-year transfer out of Jones County Junior College, Terry showed few signs of growing pains in his first spring with the Golden Eagles. The speedster displayed solid hands and quickly grasped the offensive concepts within the playbook.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	7	Kwadra Griggs	6-3	225	Jr.
RB	**25**	**Ito Smith***	**5-9**	**195**	**Sr.**
WR	**15**	**Allenzae Staggers***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**
WR	18	Korey Robertson	6-1	210	Jr.
WR	83	Chase Whitehead	5-9	175	Jr.
TE	**11**	**Julian Allen***	**6-3**	**234**	**Sr.**
LT	74	Jerry Harris	6-3	302	Sr.
LG	63	Arvin Fletcher	6-3	310	Fr.
C	52	Tyler Stutzman	6-4	275	Sr.
RG	**78**	**Devin Farrior***	**6-4**	**304**	**Sr.**
RT	**76**	**Ty Pollard***	**6-6**	**315**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	22	Darian Yancey	6-1	250	Jr.
NT	43	LaDarius Harris	6-1	280	Jr.
DT	9	Draper Riley	6-4	305	Sr.
LB	30	Paxton Schrimsher	6-3	225	So.
LB	37	Sherrod Ruff	5-10	215	Sr.
LB	5	Walden Davis	5-10	192	Jr.
CB	**3**	**Cornell Armstrong***	**5-11**	**180**	**Sr.**
CB	**2**	**Trae Collins***	**5-11**	**184**	**Sr.**
NB	**13**	**Picasso Nelson Jr.***	**5-10**	**195**	**Sr.**
S	18	Tarvarius Moore	6-2	190	Sr.
S	14	Demetrius Market	5-8	168	So.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**21**	**Parker Shaunfield***	**6-0**	**170**	**Jr.**
P	29	Zac Everett	6-1	190	Fr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	KENTUCKY
Sept. 9	SOUTHERN
Sept. 16	at ULM
Sept. 30	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 7	at UTSA
Oct. 14	UTEP
Oct. 21	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 28	UAB
Nov. 4	at Tennessee
Nov. 11	at Rice
Nov. 18	CHARLOTTE
Nov. 25	at Marshall

2016 RESULTS

W	at Kentucky	44-35
W	SAVANNAH STATE	56-0
L	TROY	31-37
W	at UTEP	34-7
W	RICE	44-28
L	at UTSA	32-55
L	at LSU	10-45
W	MARSHALL	24-14
L	CHARLOTTE	27-38
L	at Old Dominion	35-51
L	at North Texas	23-29
W	LOUISIANA TECH	39-24
	New Orleans Bowl	
W	vs. UL Lafayette	28-21

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.8	41
Rushing	174.5	62
Passing	298.2	16
Total	472.8	T-21

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.5	T-74
Rushing	149.9	46
Passing	174.9	10
Total	324.8	15

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 17	- 1.31	125

TROY | TROJANS

Sun Belt rank: 2 Record: 10-3 Sun Belt record: 6-2 (T-3rd) Stadium: Veterans Memorial Stadium (30,000)

TROJANS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Troy, Ala.
COACH: Neal Brown — At Troy and overall: 14-11, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Kenny Edenfield, Matt Moore
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Vic Koenning

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2015
RETURING STARTERS: 14; 8 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Brandon Silvers, RB Jordan Chunn, WR Emanuel Thompson, WR Deondre Douglas, DL Jamal Stadom, CB Blace Brown, CB Kamryn Melton, S Cedarius Rookard, S Kris Weatherspoon

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Silvers and Chunn are the best quarterback/running back duo in the Sun Belt. Thompson and Douglas lead a dynamic wide receiving corps that's talented and experienced. Stadom is one of the Sun Belt's best defensive linemen. The secondary has playmakers and experience.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Trojans lost three quality starters along the O-line, including four-year starting left tackle Antonio Garcia. Who will fill the Bandit role now that Rashad Dillard has graduated? And will the lack of a pass rush hurt a secondary that gave up a lot of yards last year? The linebacker corps will be brand new.

BRANDON SILVERS
Photo by Michael Wade

OFFENSE

Troy returns All-Sun Belt first-team performers Brandon Silvers and Jordan Chunn in the backfield, along with a talented receiving corps, but it must replace three starters — left tackle Antonio Garcia, right tackle Tyler Lassiter and right guard Xavier Fields — off a line that allowed the fewest sacks in college football (eight).

Sophomore Kirk Kelley and senior Johnathan Boring, who missed last year due to injury, are in a battle to replace Garcia, arguably the best lineman in school history. Deontae Crumitie (center) and Steven Rowzee (left guard) are returning starters.

Silvers is a team leader and one of the more underrated quarterbacks in the country. Last year, he completed 63.7 percent of his passes for 3,180 yards, with 23 touchdowns and 12 interceptions.

Chunn, a powerful runner who rushed for 1,288 yards and 16 scores in 2016, is already the school record-holder in touchdowns (37). He also doubles as a reliable receiver as evidenced by his 30 receptions last year. Josh Anderson and Jamarius Henderson, who impressed this spring, will add depth.

Veterans Emanuel Thompson, Deondre Douglas and Tevaris McCormick headline a talented receiving corps. Tight end Gabe Hill doesn't get much ink, but he helps spearhead the rushing attack with his blocking.

DEFENSE

Vic Koenning did a heck of a job in his second season as Troy's coordinator, but it may take him time to figure out the rotation in the front seven following the departure of Sun Belt Defensive Player of the Year Rashad Dillard and nearly the entire linebacking corps, including leading tackler William Lloyd.

Jamal Stadom, who finished second on the team with 9.5 tackles for loss last year, is a building block on the defensive front. Seth Calloway, who moved from tackle to end, is another one to watch.

Sam Lebbie, who moved from Bandit (hybrid OLB/DE) to middle linebacker this spring, is a player to keep an eye on. A.J. Smiley and Tron Folsom will see time at weakside 'backer. Tyquae Russell is in line to play the SPEAR, or nickel back, role.

> "He has one of the quickest releases of any quarterback I've ever been around. And I've been around some good ones."
> — Coach Neal Brown, on QB Brandon Silvers

Troy should be set at cornerback with the return of Kamryn Melton and Blace Brown, who led the Trojans in interceptions with six. Cedarius Rookard and Kris Weatherspoon anchor the safety positions after finishing tied for second on the team in tackles (52).

SPECIAL TEAMS

Bratcher Underwood gets first crack to replace Ryan Kay, who handled kicking and punting duties last season, as the team's kicker. Tyler Sumpter will handle the punting duties. Jabir Frye is a dynamic return specialist who averaged 27.9 yards per kick return in 2016.

OVERVIEW

Troy, behind Silvers and Chunn, has the pieces in place on offense to score on any team it plays. But question marks remain on defense after the departure of Dillard and nearly the entire linebacking corps, so new faces will need to emerge quickly if the Trojans hope to contend for the league title once again.

— Matt Lowe

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Jamarius Henderson: Henderson, an explosive all-purpose threat, had to sit out a year after transferring from Memphis. He is expected to play a major role in Troy's offense in 2017.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	**Brandon Silvers***	6-3	214	Sr.
RB	38	**Jordan Chunn***	6-1	240	Sr.
WR	8	**Emanuel Thompson***	6-1	197	Sr.
WR	11	**Tevaris McCormick***	5-10	177	Sr.
WR	80	**Deondre Douglas***	6-1	206	Jr.
TE	42	**Gabe Hill***	6-2	245	Jr.
LT	78	Kirk Kelley	6-4	329	So.
LG	67	**Steven Rowzee***	6-3	311	Sr.
C	57	**Deontae Crumitie***	6-2	283	Jr.
RG	54	Tristan Crowder	6-4	322	So.
RT	69	J.L. Gaston	6-4	287	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	94	Seth Calloway	6-3	252	Sr.
NG	90	**Trevon Sanders***	6-0	307	Jr.
DT	30	**Jamal Stadom***	6-2	266	Sr.
BAN	50	Zo Bridges	6-2	214	So.
LB	31	A.J. Smiley	6-3	223	So.
LB	5	Sam Lebbie	6-3	236	Sr.
NB	10	**Tyquae Russell***	6-1	200	Sr.
CB	18	Blace Brown	6-0	187	Jr.
CB	4	**Kamryn Melton***	5-10	187	Sr.
S	3	**Kris Weatherspoon***	6-2	208	Sr.
S	24	**Cedarius Rookard***	6-1	211	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	43	Bratcher Underwood	5-9	175	Jr.
P	98	Tyler Sumpter	5-10	216	Fr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	at Boise State
Sept. 9	ALABAMA STATE
Sept. 16	at New Mexico State
Sept. 23	AKRON
Sept. 30	at LSU
Oct. 11	SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 21	at Georgia State
Oct. 28	GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 2	IDAHO
Nov. 11	at Coastal Carolina
Nov. 25	TEXAS STATE
Dec. 2	at Arkansas State

2016 RESULTS

W	AUSTIN PEAY	57-17
L	at Clemson	24-30
W	at Southern Miss	37-31
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	52-6
W	at Idaho	34-13
W	GEORGIA STATE	31-21
W	at South Alabama	28-21
W	MASSACHUSETTS	52-31
W	APPALACHIAN STATE	28-24
L	ARKANSAS STATE	3-35
W	at Texas State	40-7
L	at Georgia Southern	24-28
	Dollar General Bowl	
W	vs. Ohio	28-23

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.7	39
Rushing	169.2	T-73
Passing	260.5	37
Total	429.6	53

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.1	T-21
Rushing	120.2	17
Passing	246.4	85
Total	366.5	35

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+10	+0.77	12

TULANE | GREEN WAVE

AAC rank: 12 Record: 4-8 AAC record: 1-7 (6th, West) Stadium: Yulman (30,000)

GREEN WAVE at a GLANCE

Location: New Orleans
COACH: Willie Fritz — At Tulane: 4-8, 1 year; overall: 197-82-1, 24 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Ruse
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jack Curtis

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998, Conference USA
LAST BOWL: 2013, New Orleans
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Dontrell Hilliard, WR Terren Encalade, DE Ade Aruna, CB Parry Nickerson, NB Jarrod Franklin, S Roderic Teamer

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense was better than advertised a year ago and returns a host of contributors in the secondary. The Green Wave also has six defensive ends with starting experience. The running backs figure to go four deep again. Watch for RB Darius Bradwell, a converted QB whom Louisville recruited heavily as a running back.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Banks is unproven. The offensive line, a weakness for five years running, struggled in the spring game. Departed defenders Tanzel Smart and Nico Marley might be irreplaceable. Tulane has won just four games in the American in its first three years.

OFFENSE

Coach Willie Fritz was happy with the production of the Tulane running backs in his first year in New Orleans. The next step is getting more dynamic play at quarterback.

He hopes Jonathan Banks will be a difference-maker after the junior college transfer secured the starting job in spring practice. Last season, the Green Wave ranked last nationally in passing efficiency and completion percentage (42.2) and third-to-last in passing yards per game (113.3).

Banks, a one-time four-star recruit, has the run/pass skills that fit Fritz's unique offense, which combines the triple option with zone-read spread principles. The question is how quickly he will get comfortable at his fourth school in four years, having started at two different junior colleges around a season on the bench at Kansas State.

He will benefit from a maturing group of receivers, led by junior Terren Encalade (36 catches, 500 yards, six TDs).

The other concern is the line. Center Junior Diaz is back after missing the last nine games of 2016 with a broken ankle, but the Wave needs better production at left tackle and both guard spots.

If the blocking holds up, Tulane could surpass its 228.1-yard rushing average from a year ago behind senior running backs Dontrell Hilliard (1,857 career yards, 5.4 average) and Sherman Badie.

DEFENSE

Tulane lost its two best players in relentless interior lineman Tanzel Smart (67 stops, 18.5 for loss) and linebacker Nico Marley, who led the team in tackles in each of the past two years. The good news is there is a wealth of experience almost everywhere else.

Ten of the top 13 tacklers return from a unit that ranked third in the AAC in yards allowed.

Cornerback Parry Nickerson, a second-team all-conference selection with 10 career interceptions, leads a five-man secondary that returns four starters.

DONTRELL HILLIARD
Photo by Romeo T Guzman/CSM via AP Images

"I feel a lot better about our team than I did last year at this point."
— Coach Willie Fritz

Fritz loved the way junior free safety Roderic Teamer (58 tackles in 2016) and senior nickel back Jarrod Franklin (78 stops) played in the spring.

Imposing senior end Ade Aruna, a 6-6, 270-pound Nigerian native who had five sacks last season, is poised for a major breakthrough. He arrived as a raw prospect with less than two years of high school experience.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Fritz inherited an abysmal kicking game and made it average, but uncertainties remain. Redshirt freshman kicker Coby Neenan is unproven but has a stronger leg than predecessor Andrew DiRocco, who opted not to return for his senior year. Punter Zach Block averaged 40.8 yards.

OVERVIEW

Fritz had no shot in year No. 1, entering the fall without a quarterback who had thrown a pass in college while introducing a radically different scheme. His second season could be a different story. If Banks plays well, the Green Wave will be good enough to move up in the league and aim for a bowl game for just the second time in the last 15 years.

— Guerry Smith

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Jonathan Banks: Beating out incumbent Glen Cuiellette and 2016 backup Johnathan Brantley, Banks made plays with his arm and his feet in the spring. He was extremely accurate when throwing on the run, a key asset with Tulane's shaky offensive line.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	4	Jonathan Banks	6-2	215	Jr.
RB	**26**	**Dontrell Hilliard***	**6-0**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	85	Jabril Clewis	6-2	215	Jr.
WR	**5**	**Terren Encalade***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	**86**	**Darnell Mooney***	**5-11**	**175**	**So.**
TE	84	Charles Jones II	6-4	255	Jr.
LT	53	Keyshawn McLeod	6-4	305	So.
LG	52	Dominique Briggs	6-3	290	Jr.
C	51	Junior Diaz	6-2	300	Jr.
RG	**73**	**Leeward Brown***	**6-4**	**335**	**So.**
RT	**72**	**John Leglue***	**6-7**	**310**	**Jr.**

DEFENSE

DE	**87**	**Ade Aruna***	**6-6**	**270**	**Sr.**
NT	**94**	**Sean Wilson***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
DT	91	Eldrick Washington	6-2	285	Sr.
DE	54	Quinlan Carroll	6-2	220	Sr.
MLB56		Rae Juan Marbley	6-0	245	Sr.
WLB40		**Zachery Harris***	**6-2**	**225**	**Jr.**
CB	**17**	**Parry Nickerson***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**
CB	**21**	**Donnie Lewis Jr.***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
NB	**6**	**Jarrod Franklin***	**6-0**	**205**	**Sr.**
SS	**38**	**Roderic Teamer***	**6-0**	**210**	**Jr.**
FS	19	Taris Shenall	6-0	190	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	43	Coby Neenan	6-2	185	Fr.
P	**49**	**Zach Block***	**6-5**	**200**	**Jr.**

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	GRAMBLING STATE
Sept. 9	at Navy
Sept. 16	at Oklahoma
Sept. 23	ARMY WEST POINT
Oct. 7	TULSA
Oct. 14	at FIU
Oct. 21	SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 27	at Memphis
Nov. 4	CINCINNATI
Nov. 11	at East Carolina
Nov. 18	HOUSTON
Nov. 25	at SMU

2016 RESULTS

L	at Wake Forest	3-7
W	SOUTHERN	66-21
L	NAVY	14-21
W	LOUISIANA	41-39
W	at Massachusetts	31-24
L	MEMPHIS	14-24
L	at Tulsa	27-50
L	SMU	31-35
L	at UCF	6-37
L	at Houston	18-30
L	TEMPLE	0-31
W	at Connecticut	38-13

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.1	T-104
Rushing	228.1	26
Passing	113.3	126
Total	341.4	118

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.7	60
Rushing	159.3	52
Passing	205.3	33
Total	364.5	31

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 9	+ 0.75	13

UAB | BLAZERS

C-USA rank: 14 Record: N/A C-USA record: N/A Stadium: Legion Field (71,594)

BLAZERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Birmingham, Ala.
COACH: Bill Clark — At UAB: 6-6, 1 year; overall: 17-10, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Les Koenning
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Reeves

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 2004, Hawaii Bowl

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB A.J. Erdely, WR Collin Lisa, LG Chris Schleuger, DE Stacy Keely, DT Teko Powell, LB Shaq Jones, LB Tevin Crews

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: At 6-4, 224 pounds, Erdely certainly has the look of a starting quarterback. He completed 7 of 10 passes for 108 yards in the spring game. And Erdely should receive decent protection after UAB signed several offensive linemen last year to beef up what had been one of the weakest areas of the team.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Experience, experience, experience. Simply put, there isn't any. Many of these players haven't played a game anywhere since 2015, and some haven't seen action since 2014. Questions remain at running back, where nobody has emerged as the obvious starter, and the defensive backfield is still unsettled.

SHAQ JONES
Photo by Jimmy Mitchell courtesy of UAB football

OFFENSE

It appears A.J. Erdely has beaten out Tyler Johnston, the Alabama state high school Player of the Year in 2015, for the starting quarterback position at UAB, which is returning to the FBS after two years without a program.

Unlike most of his teammates, Erdely has the advantage of having actually played in a Division I college football game. He saw action in five games as a freshman at Middle Tennessee, primarily in the team's Wildcat package, then transferred to Mississippi Gulf Coast for his sophomore season, where he completed 64 percent of his passes for 1,881 yards and 14 touchdowns, with only three interceptions.

Coach Bill Clark had been concerned about the offensive line, which is why the Blazers signed four linemen and two tight ends last year who are all expected to play immediately.

The Blazers are thin at the skill positions. UAB has four running backs who could see significant playing time, but none has pulled away from the pack, so the Blazers likely will use them all early in the season.

Wide receiver Collin Lisa is one of the few players who was with the team in 2014 and will open the season as the Blazers' top pass-catcher. But keep an eye on Xavier Ubosi, a junior college transfer from California.

DEFENSE

UAB's front seven appears solid, especially along the line. Defensive tackle Teko Powell could be a breakout star, if he remains healthy. The former three-star recruit out of Miami spent three seasons at Illinois but missed the 2015 season and most of 2014 with injuries. He had 22 tackles as a sophomore in 2013.

There actually is experience at linebacker, with Shaq Jones and Tevin Crews being holdovers from the 2014 team. Jones had 12.5 tackles for loss that season, while Crews has a total of 39.5 tackles as a Blazer.

There is some concern about the secondary, which is loaded with transfers. Cornerback Darez Diggs, who had four interceptions in nine games at Iowa Western Community College, and safety Will Dawkins will likely lead the way, but this unit probably won't be settled until after preseason practice.

> "We can do all this practicing, but when they cut the lights on, that's when we'll see who really shines."
>
> — Coach Bill Clark

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Nick Vogel began his career at UAB, transferred to Southern Miss when the program was disbanded, and then transferred back to UAB. Punting duties will be handled by Joel Dixon, a native of Melbourne, Australia, who last played at San Joaquin Delta Community College in California.

OVERVIEW

After two seasons without playing a game, it is inevitable that the Blazers will have some serious growing pains this season. But UAB has brought in a large number of JC and other transfers, so the team actually won't be as inexperienced as one might think. Still, only a handful of these players have ever appeared in a Division I football game, and the team certainly does not yet have any continuity.

— Cary Estes

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE				
QB	11	A.J. Erdely	6-4	224
RB	24	James Noble	5-7	179
WR	13	Collin Lisa	5-10	173
WR	7	Xavier Ubosi	6-3	223
WR	3	Andre Wilson	5-9	186
TE	44	Logan Scott	6-2	234
LT	51	James Davis	6-2	286
LG	59	Chris Schleuger	6-4	304
C	72	Lee Dufour	6-3	297
RG	58	Malique Johnson	6-3	323
RT	57	Justice Powers	6-3	298
DEFENSE				
DE	97	Stacy Keely	6-7	223
NT	99	Garrett Marino	6-2	275
DT	93	Teko Powell	6-3	315
LB	42	Shaq Jones	6-3	246
LB	23	Tevin Crews	6-2	222
LB	52	Fitzgerald Mofor	5-11	235
LB	27	Chris Woolbright	6-3	234
CB	17	Jordan Petty	5-9	195
CB	2	Darez Diggs	6-2	211
S	3	Will Dawkins	5-10	193
S	10	Garrison Mitchell	6-0	202
SPECIAL TEAMS				
K	19	Nick Vogel	5-10	190
P	37	Joel Dixon	6-2	212

*Note: UAB's spring roster does not list years of eligibility, presumably because many are still being sorted out due to the two-year hiatus.

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	ALABAMA A&M
Sept. 9	at Ball State
Sept. 16	COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 23	at North Texas
Oct. 7	LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 14	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 21	at Charlotte
Oct. 28	at Southern Miss
Nov. 4	RICE
Nov. 11	at UTSA
Nov. 18	at Florida
Nov. 25	UTEP

UCF | KNIGHTS

AAC rank: 3 **Record: 6-7** **AAC record: 4-4 (3rd, East)** **Stadium: Spectrum Stadium (44,206)**

KNIGHTS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Orlando, Fla.
COACH: Scott Frost — At UCF and overall: 6-7, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Troy Walters
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Erik Chinander

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2014, AAC co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2015
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 8 offense, 4 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB McKenzie Milton, RB Jawon Hamilton, WR Tre'Quan Smith, TE Jordan Franks, TE Jordan Akins, WR Cam Stewart, DE Tony Guerad, NT Jamiyus Pittman, LB Shaquem Griffin

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense is loaded at the skill positions and has ample experience on the line. The tight end combo of Franks and Akins may be the best receiving tandem in the league. Griffin was the AAC's Defensive Player of the Year. The defensive front is talented and deep. Kicking looks solid.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: WR/KR Tristan Payton will miss the first six games after testing positive for marijuana at NCAA-mandated drug tests in conjunction with last season's bowl appearance. Mostly, the Knights face some key issues on defense. Griffin is the only returning starter among the four linebacker positions, and the secondary is entirely new.

SHAQUEM GRIFFIN
Photo by Joe Robbins

OFFENSE

UCF looks to make major strides in coach Scott Frost's second season after ranking in the bottom half of the American Athletic Conference offensively in 2016.

The Knights return their starting quarterback, their leading rusher, and eight of the top nine in receptions. With a veteran offensive line that returns three starters, plus a fourth who started the last five games of the season, UCF should be ready to make major improvements over the 28.8 points and 350.9 yards it averaged a year ago.

Sophomore McKenzie Milton backed up a freshman year that saw him beat out incumbent starter Justin Holman with what Frost called an "unbelievable" spring to solidify the quarterback spot. He should improve on his 57.7 percent completion percentage from last season, when he averaged 198.3 yards per game.

Running back Jawon Hamilton also drew praise for his work in the spring. He rushed for a team-best 495 yards as a freshman last year, also catching 17 passes. Sophomore Adrian Killings Jr. (325 rushing yards) adds depth.

Wide receiver Tre'Quan Smith, the AAC Rookie of the Year in 2015, has 109 receptions for 1,577 yards and nine touchdowns in two seasons. Cam Stewart (18 receptions, 172 yards last year) is a returning starter at receiver.

The Knights have a potent receiving pair at tight end with senior Jordan Franks and junior Jordan Akins, both former wide receivers, combining for 34 catches for 490 yards in 2016.

DEFENSE

Defensive tackles Trysten Hill and Tony Guerad, and nose guard Jamiyus Pittman, are returning starters up front in the 3-4 scheme. Senior Shaquem Griffin, last season's AAC Defensive Player of the Year, returns at linebacker.

Griffin led the conference in sacks with 11.5 and intercepted a pass. Hill, Guerad and Pittman combined for 19.5 tackles for loss.

> "I think we'll be a deeper team in most positions than we were last year."
> — Coach Scott Frost

But the rest of the defense is depleted, with new starters at the other seven positions. Of that group, junior linebacker Pat Jasinski had 3.5 sacks among his 41 tackles.

Frost expressed confidence in the depth at safety, however, and redshirt freshman Richie Grant was impressive at one of the corners.

But inside linebacker and the other corner spot are issues to be addressed in fall camp.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior kicker Matthew Wright is 30 of 39 on field-goal attempts over the last two years; he was 9 of 13 from 40-plus yards last year. The Knights will look to junior Mac Loudermilk (six punts for a 35.0-yard average last year) to take over punting duties for Caleb Houston. Defensive back Chris Johnson handled 26 of UCF's 27 punt returns last year, but the Knights will be looking for new kick returners.

OVERVIEW

The Knights made huge strides in Frost's first season, getting to 6-7 after the winless 2015 campaign. They easily have the offense to get back to the postseason, but they must have the answers on defense for a really big year.

— Paul Borden

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Richie Grant: A redshirt freshman, Grant spent most of the spring working with the first team at one of the vacated cornerback spots. During his senior year at Choctawhatchee High in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., he had 37 tackles and four interceptions. He also had four return scores and more than 1,000 receiving yards.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	10	**McKenzie Milton***	5-11	170	So.
RB	1	**Jawon Hamilton***	5-9	190	So.
WR	4	**Tre'Quan Smith***	6-1	200	Jr.
WR	11	**Cam Stewart***	6-3	195	Jr.
WR	5	Dredrick Snelson	6-0	190	So.
TE	15	**Jordan Franks***	6-3	225	Sr.
LT	66	**Aaron Evans***	6-5	290	Sr.
LG	75	Tate Hernly	6-3	293	Sr.
C	72	**Jordan Johnson***	6-2	275	So.
RG	79	Chavis Dickey	6-4	330	Sr.
RT	78	**Wyatt Miller***	6-4	290	Jr.

DEFENSE

DT	95	**Trysten Hill***	6-1	295	So.
NG	5	**Jamiyus Pittman***	6-0	295	Sr.
DE	93	**Tony Guerad***	6-3	275	Sr.
LB	18	**Shaquem Griffin***	6-1	213	Sr.
LB	56	Pat Jasinski	6-1	220	Jr.
LB	44	Nate Evans	6-1	236	So.
LB	99	Titus Davis	6-2	230	So.
CB	20	Brandon Moore	6-0	172	So.
CB	27	Richie Grant	6-0	170	Fr.
S	23	Tre Neal	6-1	200	Jr.
S	25	Kyle Gibson	5-11	182	Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	11	**Matthew Wright***	6-0	185	Jr.
P	48	Mac Loudermilk	6-1	228	Jr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	FIU
Sept. 9	MEMPHIS
Sept. 16	GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 23	at Maryland
Sept. 30	MAINE
Oct. 7	at Cincinnati
Oct. 14	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 21	at Navy
Nov. 4	at SMU
Nov. 11	CONNECTICUT
Nov. 18	at Temple
Nov. 24	SOUTH FLORIDA

2016 RESULTS

W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	38-0
L	at Michigan	14-51
L	MARYLAND	24-30
W	at FIU	53-14
W	at East Carolina	47-29
L	TEMPLE	25-26
W	at Connecticut	24-16
L	at Houston	24-31
W	TULANE	37-6
W	CINCINNATI	24-3
L	TULSA	20-35
L	at South Florida	31-48
	Cure Bowl	
L	vs. Arkansas State	13-31

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.8	66
Rushing	141.2	104
Passing	209.7	T-89
Total	350.9	113

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.6	42
Rushing	169.5	62
Passing	200.8	28
Total	370.3	39

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+1	+0.08	T-58

WESTERN KENTUCKY | HILLTOPPERS

C-USA rank: 1 Record: 11-3 C-USA record:7-1 (1st, East) Stadium: Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium (22,113)

HILLTOPPERS at a GLANCE

LOCATION: Bowling Green, Ky.
COACH: Mike Sanford — At WKU and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Junior Adams
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clayton White

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2016
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2013
RETURNING STARTERS: 12, 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Mike White, RB D'Andre Ferby, RB Quinton Baker, RB Leon Allen, KR Kylen Towner, DE Derik Overstreet, LB Joel Iyiegbuniwe, S Marcus Ward

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Western Kentucky should still be able to light up the scoreboard. White's leadership should help an inexperienced WR group, and a stable of dangerous running backs can allow the Tops to remain versatile on offense. WKU had the nation's second-best rushing defense in 2016 behind Alabama.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Much of Western's success could depend on the play of the offensive line. The Hilltoppers need a new center, left tackle and right tackle; inconsistent play there could derail that unit's ability to replicate the numbers from previous seasons.

MIKE WHITE
Photo by Michael Wade

OFFENSE

Western Kentucky will have a bit of a new look offensively under new coach Mike Sanford and new coordinator Junior Adams. The Hilltoppers, dominant on that side of the ball in three years under Jeff Brohm, will transition to a Boise State-styled system with more shifts, motions and option-run looks.

But the slight change in formation and style shouldn't slow down WKU, especially given that Mike White returns for his second season at quarterback. The former South Florida QB threw for 4,363 yards and 37 touchdowns in his first active season with the Tops.

White will need to find new go-to receivers after Taywan Taylor and Nicholas Norris (who combined to catch 174 passes for 3,048 yards and 31 touchdowns in 2016) graduated.

Western Kentucky could be loaded in the backfield. Quinton Baker and Marquez Trigg are back, and D'Andre Ferby participated in spring ball after missing the 2016 season with a shoulder injury. That trio could be joined by Leon Allen, a 1,500-yard back in 2014 who missed the past two seasons with a knee injury.

The offensive line lost a trio of pro prospects, but guards Brandon Ray and Dennis Edwards are back to anchor the front.

Help at tight end could come from Justin Johnson, who joined the Tops from the school's basketball team in the spring, and junior college prospect Mik'Quan Deane.

DEFENSE

Sanford brought in Clayton White to be WKU's defensive coordinator.

White, who was North Carolina State's safeties coach in 2016, won't change much schematically, varying between a 4-3 and 4-2-5 look. His line and secondary have a chance to be very good, but questions at linebacker remain.

Western's three leading tacklers all moved on from the program. Junior Joel Iyiegbuniwe spearheads a unit that needs junior Masai Whyte and sophomore Ben Holt to step up.

"This team is very fun to be around. The relationships that we've built have been pretty significant already in a short period of time."

— Coach Mike Sanford

The defensive front will lean on senior Chris Johnson and Evan Sayner up the middle. Junior college transfer Carson Jordan, senior Tanner Reeves and senior Derik Overstreet lead the unit at defensive end.

The back end is in good shape. Seniors Joe Brown, De'Andre Simmons and Leverick Johnson and sophomore Jason Johnson make for a deep group at cornerback. Seniors Juwan Gardner and Marcus Ward solidify the safety spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Western Kentucky had one of the better special teams units in the nation in 2016. It should remain just as dangerous in 2017 with returners Kylen Towner (kickoffs) and Nacarius Fant (punts) being seniors. Kicker Skyler Simcox (16 of 22 on field goal attempts) and punter Jake Collins (42.7 yards per attempt) are back.

OVERVIEW

Western Kentucky has won two consecutive Conference USA titles, is 21-2 in its past 23 conference games and 28-5 in its last 33 overall. Sanford was brought in to keep that train rolling ... and the 34-year-old, first-time head coach certainly has the pieces to do it, if all his stars stay healthy.

— Chad Bishop

TOP NEWCOMER

TE Mik'Quan Deane: Sanford's offense calls for a pass-catching, dynamic tight end, and Deane could end up being that guy early in the season. The 6-4, 240-pounder caught 22 passes for 322 yards and four touchdowns last season at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M, where he was ranked as the No. 4 Junior College tight end by 247Sports.com.

2017 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	14	**Mike White***	6-4	225	Sr.
RB	32	D'Andre Ferby	6-1	225	Jr.
WR	1	**Nacarius Fant***	5-9	185	Sr.
WR	8	Kylen Towner	5-8	175	Sr.
WR	11	Lucky Jackson	6-1	185	So.
TE	19	Deon Yelder	6-4	255	Sr.
LT	75	**Jimmie Sims***	6-4	295	Sr.
LG	51	**Brandon Ray***	6-2	300	Sr.
C	67	Seth Joest	6-2	300	Fr.
RG	64	**Dennis Edwards***	6-1	305	Jr.
RT	69	Matt Nord	6-6	320	Sr.

DEFENSE

DE	42	**Derik Overstreet***	6-2	250	Sr.
DT	3	**Chris Johnson***	6-1	285	Sr.
DT	56	Evan Sayner	6-3	300	Jr.
DE	43	Carson Jordan	6-2	255	Jr.
LB	4	**Joel Iyiegbuniwe***	6-1	230	Jr.
LB	25	Masai Whyte	6-0	225	Jr.
CB	7	**Joe Brown***	5-10	195	Sr.
CB	1	Leverick Johnson	6-0	185	Sr.
CB	23	**De'Andre Simmons***	5-11	195	Sr.
S	14	Juwan Gardner	6-0	195	Sr.
S	8	Marcus Ward	6-3	220	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	88	**Skyler Simcox***	6-0	180	Jr.
P	49	**Jake Collins***	6-1	210	Jr.

*Returning starters in Bold

2017 SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 9	at Illinois
Sept. 16	LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 23	BALL STATE
Oct. 7	at UTEP
Oct. 14	CHARLOTTE
Oct. 20	at Old Dominion
Oct. 28	FAU
Nov. 4	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 11	at Marshall
Nov. 17	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 25	at FIU

2016 RESULTS

W	RICE	46-14
L	at Alabama	10-38
W	at Miami (OH)	31-24
L	VANDERBILT (OT)	30-31
W	HOUSTON BAPTIST	50-3
L	at Louisiana Tech	52-55
W	at Middle Tennessee (2OT)	44-43
W	OLD DOMINION	59-24
W	at FAU	52-3
W	FIU	49-21
W	NORTH TEXAS	45-7
W	at Marshall	60-6
	C-USA Championship Game	
W	vs. Louisiana Tech	58-44
	Boca Raton Bowl	
W	vs. Memphis	51-31

2016 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	45.5	1
Rushing	186.4	52
Passing	336.8	5
Total	523.1	5

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.6	41
Rushing	97.2	2
Passing	279.4	119
Total	376.6	41

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 2	+ 0.14	52

Darren McFadden 2006 Doak Walker Award Winner
Photo by AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez

A Look BACK

5 YEARS AGO: 2012

In a wild year of the quarterback, Texas A&M had the most sensational combination runner-passer (Johnny Manziel); Georgia had the most potent thrower (Aaron Murray, 3,893 yards, 36 TDs); and Alabama had the most highly efficient passer (AJ McCarron, national leader). It all added up to Manziel leading the most exciting, shocking result of the season — a 29-24 comeback victory over the top-ranked Tide that boosted him to the front of the Heisman Trophy class — but McCarron still led his team to the SEC title game vs. Murray and the Bulldogs. McCarron led a stirring comeback victory and, once that was accomplished, the Tide rolled over Notre Dame, 42-14, in the national title game.

SEC champion: Alabama (13-1, 7-1, West) beat Georgia (12-2, 7-1, East), 32-28

SEC Players of the Year: Johnny Manziel, QB, Texas A&M; Jarvis Jones, LB, Georgia

Heisman Trophy: Johnny Manziel, QB, Texas A&M (Jadeveon Clowney, DE, South Carolina, was 6th; Jarvis Jones, LB, Georgia, 9th)

National champion: Although Notre Dame was undefeated and ranked No. 1, Alabama was a double-digit favorite in the national championship game. And for good reason: The Tide raced to a 28-0 lead to capture its second consecutive title, third in four years.

10 YEARS AGO: 2007

LSU was amazingly resilient, becoming the first team to overcome two defeats to win the national championship. Remember, the Tigers quarterback from the previous season (JaMarcus Russell) had left early to become the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft, and by the end of the season they were dealing with the distraction of reports that coach Les Miles had accepted the job at Michigan. But they hung in there. Despite a triple-OT loss at Kentucky, and then the remarkable 50-48 triple-OT loss against Arkansas, everything else that needed to happen fell into place — including three teams above them losing in their last game, and the Tigers beating Tennessee in the SEC title game.

SEC champion: LSU (12-2, 6-2, West) beat Tennessee (10-4, 6-2, East), 21-14

SEC Players of the Year: Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas; Glenn Dorsey, DT, LSU.

Heisman Trophy: Tim Tebow, QB, Florida (McFadden was 2nd, Dorsey 9th)

National champion: LSU spotted Ohio State a 10-0 lead in New Orleans, and then rolled to 31 consecutive points en route to a 38-24 victory and its second BCS title in five years.

15 YEARS AGO: 2002

The Dawgs and Hogs won their division championships in very different fashion — Georgia controlled the race in the powerful Eastern Division, while Arkansas scratched its way back in the mediocre West (where top team Alabama was on probation). Both champions called upon miracle finishes to pull out their clinching victories: David Greene's fourth-and-19 touchdown pass to Michael Johnson with 1:25 remaining lifted Georgia over Auburn, 24-21. Arkansas needed Matt Jones to find DeCori Birmingham for a 31-yard score with nine seconds left to overcome LSU, 21-20.

SEC champion: Georgia (13-1, 7-1, East) drubbed Arkansas (9-5, 5-3, West), 30-3

SEC Players of the Year: Artose Pinner, RB, Kentucky; David Pollack, DE, Georgia

Heisman Trophy: Carson Palmer, QB, Southern California (No SEC players in top 10)

National champion: Ohio State (14-0) shocked top-ranked Miami in the Fiesta Bowl, 31-24, in double overtime, after a controversial pass interference penalty helped the Buckeyes.

20 YEARS AGO: 1997

When Florida handled Tennessee on Sept. 20, it looked like the defending national champion was on its way to its sixth consecutive division title and fifth straight SEC crown ... until things went awry for coach Steve Spurrier and his Gators. Florida was shocked by LSU and Georgia, while the Vols just kept getting better en route to winning the East. Led by QB Peyton Manning, Tennessee then used a memorable comeback against Auburn to capture the SEC title, overcoming a 20-7 first-half deficit.

SEC champion: Tennessee (11-2, 7-1, East) beat Auburn (10-3, 6-2, West), 30-29

SEC Player of the Year: Peyton Manning, QB, Tennessee

Heisman Trophy: Michigan CB-WR-RS Charles Woodson became the first predominantly defensive player to win the award, edging Manning in one of the closest and most surprising votes ever. (Tim Couch, QB, Kentucky, 9th)

National champion: Michigan (12-0, AP poll) beat Washington State in the Rose Bowl, 21-16; Nebraska (13-0, coaches poll) beat Tennessee in the Orange, 42-17.

25 YEARS AGO: 1992

The Crimson Tide, coached by Gene Stallings, had been overlooked all season in favor of 1991 national co-champions Washington and Miami. And once the Tide got the chance to face Florida in the first SEC Championship Game, they didn't miss a trick. And they were even better in the national championship showdown with No. 1 Miami in the Sugar Bowl. Alabama did it mostly with defense, lead by bookend defensive ends John Copeland and Eric Curry, and a secondary stocked with stars like Antonio Langham, Sam Shade and George Teague.

SEC champion: Alabama (13-0, 8-0, West) beat Florida (9-4, 6-2, East), 28-21

SEC Player of the Year: Garrison Hearst, RB, Georgia

Heisman Trophy: Gino Torretta, QB, Miami (Hearst was 3rd; Eric Curry, DE, Alabama, 9th)

National champion: Alabama won its seventh official national title by thrashing the heavily favored Hurricanes, 34-13.

50 YEARS AGO: 1967

Tennessee started the season in the Top 10 but lost a tough opener at eighth-ranked UCLA. Doug Dickey's squad, led by QB Dewey Warren, Hall of Fame center Bob Johnson and linebacker Jack Reynolds, roared back to life. A month later, the Vols smashed sixth-ranked Alabama, 24-13, in Birmingham. The Vols went on to win nine in a row to capture their first SEC title in more than a decade, busting the seven-year dominance of Alabama and Ole Miss. Although they rose to No. 2 in the polls, they were leapfrogged by Southern California when the Trojans beat UCLA at the end of the season. Tennessee's Orange Bowl game against No. 3 Oklahoma was a classic, with the Vols bouncing back from a 19-0 halftime deficit to within 26-24, but they missed a 43-yard field-goal attempt as time expired.

SEC champion: Tennessee (9-2, 6-0)

SEC Player of the Year: Bob Goodridge, WR, Vanderbilt

Heisman Trophy: Gary Beban, QB, UCLA (Bob Johnson, C, Tennessee, 6th; Dewey Warren, QB, Tennessee, 8th)

National champion: With O.J. Simpson leading the way, USC beat top-ranked UCLA in the battle for Los Angeles and went on to win the national championship. The Trojans (9-1) defeated Indiana in the Rose Bowl, 14-3. The following season the pollsters agreed to include bowl games before collecting final votes.

BE COMFORTABLE
IN YOUR OWN JEANS
Wrangler®

FLAVOR BLITZ SOUTHERN STYLE

goldenflake.com

Golden Flake THE *South's Original* POTATO CHIP